

## MEETING RECORD

**NAME OF GROUP:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Wednesday, March 13, 2002, 1:00 p.m., Room 113, First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Mary Bills, Jon Carlson, Steve Duvall, Gerry Krieser, Patte Newman, Greg Schwinn, Cecil Steward, Roger Larson and Tommy Taylor; Kathleen Sellman, Kent Morgan, Stephen Henrichsen, Mike DeKalb, Duncan Ross, Mike Brienzo, Teresa McKinstry and Jean Walker of the Planning Department; Roger Figard of Public Works & Utilities; Rick Peo, City Law Department; media and other interested citizens.

**STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:** Special Public Hearing on the “draft” **2025 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan**, dated February 6, 2002.

Chair Schwinn called the meeting to order and requested a motion approving the minutes of the Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Work Sessions held February 13, 2002 and February 27, 2002. Newman moved approval, seconded by Krieser and carried 7-0: Schwinn, Bills-Strand, Newman, Carlson, Duvall, Larson and Krieser voting ‘yes’; Taylor absent; Steward abstained.

Chair Schwinn then recited the protocol for this special public hearing. The names will be called by the Clerk in the order in which they appear on the sign-in sheet. This hearing will be continued on March 27, 2002, beginning at 1:00 p.m. The March 27<sup>th</sup> hearing will begin with a presentation by the staff on proposed amendments. Written comments or emails will be accepted in the Planning Department offices until 12:00 Noon on Friday, March 29, 2002.

Each person will be allowed to testify only once and shall have three minutes to speak, unless additional time is requested and granted.

Chair Schwinn then opened the special public hearing on the proposed 2025 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan.

**1. Parks Coble**, 3420 Glenhaven Place, testified as a member of the **Mayor’s Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee** and presented the Committee’s proposed amendments to the draft Plan (**Exhibit #1**). He emphasized that the difficulty of developing trails is substantial and the Committee believes that trails are the best way to utilize the drainage channel and greenway corridors, particularly when done in advance of development. This can also be done inexpensively.

Schwinn confirmed that these are amendments proposed by the Committee to the draft Plan. Coble stated that to be true.

Kent Morgan, Assistant Director of Planning, stated that the Planning staff will continue to inventory the proposed amendments but the Commission will need to make a motion to adopt any of the amendments. The proposed amendments will be listed and correlated with the individual chapters.

**2. Doug Rotthaus**, 8001 Lake Street, testified on behalf of the **Realtors Association of Lincoln**. He indicated that the Realtors Association will be sending the Commission some written documentation with more detail. The Realtors Association is requesting three amendments: 1) eliminate the development priorities within Tier I; 2) add more developable land to the overall plan in Tier I; and 3) allow for additional acreage development and approve the build-through design standards presented to the Comprehensive Plan Committee.

With regard to eliminating the development priorities within Tier I, Rotthaus suggested that the “priorities” may delay the development of developable land in market desirable areas. The availability of lots where the market wants the lots is a very important part of the Plan that needs to be added. A shortage of “in demand” lots forces higher lot prices, which means less affordable housing; fewer families are able to move up; first home buyers would have less affordable homes available; and higher housing prices also mean fewer jobs for the community. The Realtors Association is concerned about Lincoln’s ability to replace jobs and have ample supply of buildable lots in desirable areas. Lincoln has always pointed to its supply of affordable housing as a big asset and this plan as written threatens that asset.

With regard to adding more developable land to Tier I and build-through design standards, Rotthaus suggested that Lincoln has already seen gradual price increases in growing areas. He submitted some statistics from multiple listing service (**Exhibit #2**) showing that people are leapfrogging out of the community and looking for more affordable housing. The proposed Plan will negatively affect affordable housing; will lead to loss of jobs in the future; and more importantly, it will reduce our tax base as people move away. Fewer dollars would be available for our existing neighborhoods and the expansion of critical services, i.e. police and fire protection.

Steward posed the question to Rotthaus: If you were responsible for providing that solid infrastructure, how would you quantify where the market wants to do it?” Rotthaus explained that it would be based on the existing housing sales and sales that are taking place in adjacent areas as areas grow.

**3. Bob Norris**, President of **Nebraska Neon Sign Company**, testified stating that Nebraska Neon is “a business-to-business business” and this is the foundation of his comments. Norris observed that some sections of the Plan do not adequately recognize and/or address the importance and need of the retail goods and services sector of our community. It affects the consuming public and the businesses making the goods and services available. It also promotes conflict between planning and the development process. To succeed today, retail and commercial need to be near traffic corridors, reasonably recognized and accessed. Norris submitted proposed amendments (**Exhibit #3**). It is not good planning to not have the indicators for new proposed commercial and

industrial centers at Hwy 2 and where they cross the East and South Beltway corridors. Where the East Beltway crosses "O" Street should be an indicator and the I-80 and East Beltway intersection should be an indicator. We know there will be commercial development requests for those areas and they need to be identified now.

With regard to the chapter on The Economy (p.F15), Norris is suggesting to add a section which recognizes retail goods and services as one of the other business forces in a variety of industries that should be addressed. He suggested that "Retail markets dictate that facilities locate on traffic corridors allowing for easy recognition, access and development of customer amenities."

With regard to the chapter on Business and Commerce (specifically, p.F38), General Principles for All Commercial & Industrial Uses, Norris believes that this beginning portion sets the tone for the rest of that chapter in dealing with future uses in those areas. Quite frankly, Norris noted that there are eight points, some of which set the tone for conflict later on in the development process. He suggested adding the term "designated green space" after "native prairie", and delete the last point completely. He also suggested deleting the seventh point as the verbiage is so general that it is open to interpretation and promotes conflict later on. He does not understand how we can define "enhance".

**4. Bill Ludwig**, of the Environmental Design Group, Ltd., 5000 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, Iowa, testified on behalf of **The Gately Property**. This is a 140-acre tract directly south of Ashley Heights, located in the Priority 1 area located just off the interstate at N.W. 48th Street (**Exhibit #4**). These property owners have been working with the staff on a planned residential neighborhood coming off of N.W. 48<sup>th</sup>, with a small neighborhood shopping area intended for the neighborhood itself; there will be a multi-family area directly to the south; and townhome development to the north. There will be greenbelts and greenways throughout the development. There are bikeways and walkways directly to the park area, and to the north and Ashley Heights and into the areas extended to the east. In terms of types of housing, there will be townhomes, courtyard homes, smaller single family homes and some larger single family homes. It is mixed use residential. It is intended to be a more or less self contained planned community that will be able to function with the residential areas that are there.

Carlson asked whether this developer is supportive of the mixed use elements of the new plan. Ludwig answered in the affirmative.

**5. Dallas McGee**, of the City Urban Development Department, referred to p.F49 and testified in support of maintaining and reinforcing the existing Theater Policy. Lincoln's highly successful theater policy must be maintained and enforced recognizing Downtown as an entertainment center. The key change is the word "should" to "must". This change does make a difference. It is especially critical now to support the existing language of "must" as the city is negotiating with a developer to build an entertainment center Downtown. It will be anchored by a multi-screen theater of 12 to 15 screens. This is moving forward in part because of the existing theater policy which limits the number of screens that can be built outside of Downtown. The Urban Development Department supports the language in the current Comprehensive Plan.

**6. Polly McMullen** appeared on behalf of the **Downtown Lincoln Association**, and expressed DLA's support for the draft plan as it relates to Downtown and Antelope Valley. The plans references to Downtown, especially F49 and F50, entitled, "Principles for Downtown", continue our community's long tradition of support for a strong Downtown.

DLA would also like to go on record in support of the language change on page F49 requested by Urban Development regarding the Downtown theater policy. DLA believes that it is extremely important that this policy dating back to 1984 be maintained and reaffirmed in the new Plan. The policy is important because it supports the momentum which is underway in Downtown today. Significant progress continues to be made on the Block 41 Entertainment Center development and maintaining the theater policy is critical. **(Exhibit #5)**

Bills-Strand requested that the Commission be provided with the statistics of the number of people that attend theaters that are not Downtown versus those that are in the Downtown area. McMullen indicated that she would try to get this information; however, it is information that Douglas Theater Company has and she is not sure it has been made available outside of their company before.

**7. Cinnamon Dokken**, 118 North 14th Street, who has owned and operated a book store for 11 years, urged that the Commission recognize that the proposed Plan is good and should not be expanded to include more growth. Overexpansion will siphon resources away from the heart of our city—Downtown. It is true that Downtown is not going anywhere, but it is foolish to let the support of infrastructure and neighborhood elements decline. No parent will want to send their child to a university surrounded by crime and decay. The proposed Plan provides for smart growth. Even this plan is stretched to the limit of what we can afford. The road system alone is short of providing for Tier I roads. You will hear from those who want more land in the plan and they will say that more growth will provide more revenue. But it also means more costs in infrastructure and we won't have the money to do it. Dokken has lived here for 15 years and her taxes have never gone down. Who would benefit from putting more land in this plan and who would suffer? She was not paid to come here today. Many others like her are counting on the Commission.

**8. Kent Seacrest** appeared on behalf of three clients.

**Land Construction, Inc.** owns property at the southwest corner of West "O" Street and N.W. 56th Street. The land use map approved in the Comprehensive Plan in 1998-99 shows his client's northern 300' designated as commercial in the current plan and the back south half is shown as industrial. Seacrest requested that this use continue to be shown rather than being shown as all commercial and heavy industrial as proposed in the new Plan. His client would request to retain a mix of commercial up against "O" Street. Seacrest purported that nothing has changed to cause any different land use. **(Exhibit #6).**

**North Forty Golf, Inc.** owns the North Forty Golf Course at No. 84<sup>th</sup> & Adams Street on the southwest corner. Presently, this is a 40 acre tract. The current plan shows it as open space. Seacrest suggested that open space does not make sense because it is used for a multitude of purposes, including a private golf course and lighted driving range. It has a restaurant and liquor license. It is not open space. The proposed plan shows this property as residential. Seacrest

requested an amendment to show this property as commercial, which is its current use. The proposal is not to show the whole 40 acres as commercial, but a mixed pattern with about 24 acres of commercial, and then wrapped around it would be residential so that existing homes would have a proposed residential neighborhood up against them before the commercial activities in case the land use ever did change. **(Exhibit #7)**

**Winona Ketelhut, Connie Heier and Patricia Slaughter** own property in the proposed Tier II area of the Stevens Creek basin. These owners would like their farms located between South 112th and South 120th, south of Old Cheney Road, designated as low density residential to accommodate the AGR zoning pattern. **(Exhibit #8)**

The proposed plan basically prohibits any acreage development in the 3-mile area. There are 6% of us in this community that won't give up their acreage living. We should not have a policy taking it away from them. Seacrest provided an amendment to p.F72, “Guiding Principles for Rural Areas”, including a “build-through” model and “build-through design standards”. **(Exhibit #8)**. If you prohibit acreages within the 3-mile jurisdiction, they will bounce further out resulting in more transportation costs and services. Seacrest urged that it makes sense to allow acreages in the 3-mile area under the “build-through”.

Carlson clarified that the draft land use map shows the property at 84th & Adams (North Forty Golf, Inc.) as urban residential. Seacrest stated that he is requesting an amendment to commercial.

Newman inquired as to the zoning of other golf courses. Seacrest did not have this information readily available but offered to provide it in writing.

Steward observed that the “build-through” assumes that the economic conditions will inevitably cause the owner to subdivide the property. One of the problems with acreages is that that 6% of very strong willed people, even if the city wishes to annex, will continue to wish to live on that amount of land which suddenly becomes in the city limits and extends the infrastructure and services on a very low density condition. How do we overcome that? In response, Seacrest referred to South Pointe. We anticipated that we were going to do residential. We put in the covenants that there would be a shopping center next to the residences. When we came in with the shopping center, not one of those residents showed up opposing it because they knew it was in there. The text amendment proposed by Seacrest provides that the owners be put on notice in the development agreement. It also requires the residential property owners to agree to a special assessment district in the future.

**9. Marge Schlitt**, 2600 C Street, gave comments based on her experience living in New York City. NYC is very, very densely populated and yet somehow the people in New York City have the value system to save the things that are precious to them. One of the things that is precious are the large parks in the city. They don't let anything bother those parks. They don't let the traffic go through the parks. Here in Lincoln, we don't have the pressures of population but we do have some things that are very important to the community that we want to save for the future. She has had a long involvement in Wilderness Park starting from when it was first established. If you go to where Beal Slough connects with Salt Creek in Wilderness Park, it used to be a little trickle. The reason it is

now a grand canyon is because the overflow and runoff from all the urban development areas come through in a flash and are washing it away. There are other dangers impacting the park and there is need for all sorts of protections, buffers, and protection against more roads. This community really needs this Commission to be willing to preserve these areas for the future for the people and our grandchildren. The Commission needs to take this responsibility very seriously to preserve this park and the other greenways.

**10. Bob Grimitt**, So. 24th Street, appeared on behalf of his spouse and in-laws regarding the acreage issue. His family owns property on West Van Dorn at about 68th Street. This property is directly abutted by a one section subdivision of 3-acre lots directly to the west. All the way down West Van Dorn to the east there is low density housing. Why is it fair that his brother-in-law's 30 year neighbor can build and the other neighbors to the west can build; the neighbors to the east can build; but his brother-in-law cannot. It is not just a fairness test. There is a test of common sense. He finds it very difficult to say that it is common sense to require his brother-in-law to keep a piece of farm land which he won't be able to farm anymore, and expect him somehow to keep farming and make it economical. More than that, there are sections in this county (and West Van Dorn is now one of them) with paved roads, good water, and good drainage--a place where people want to live on three acres or less. However, with this new Plan, we now have a section of real estate on West Van Dorn which is not compatible with permitted agricultural uses. It does not pass the test of common sense to require that he keep the farmland for x number of years and not be allowed to develop it into acreages. This is not good planning and does not seem to be good long term planning for this community. It seems to be more sensible to take clusters that are already developed and find a way to make it work, but not leave farm land in the middle of significantly developed areas isolated and standing by itself. There has to be a better way than a plan that has the sole virtue of being simplistic. The 25-year moratorium is simple but it does not pass the test of fairness or common sense.

**11. Phyllis Hergenrader**, 5701 Yankee Hill Road, testified in opposition to the Yankee Hill Road overpass study, p.F110. Previous studies have shown that a bridge crossing of Wilderness Park would not relieve north/south traffic congestion, but it appears that it doesn't really matter what those studies have shown. Why can't we let Wilderness Park be a testament to our foresight and make plans to protect it instead of putting a study in the plan for a roadway bridge? Hergenrader urged that the Yankee Hill Road overpass of Wilderness Park be deleted from the proposed studies. She also urged that the concepts embodied in the Greenprint Challenge be incorporated into the Plan. **(Exhibits #9 and #10)**

**12. Bryant Reynolds**, 3800 So. 48<sup>th</sup> Street, a UNL student, urged that the Greenprint Challenge be included and requested that the preservation of Wilderness Park be conserved by not allowing more roads to be built through the park. Parks are important to students as recreational areas and the bike paths provide easy and safe transportation.

**13. David Grimes**, 22300 No. 1st, Raymond, who farms in northern Lancaster County, and as a member of the Raymond Central School Board and Chairman of the Raymond United Methodist Church Board, testified with concerns about maintaining rural communities. His concerns relate to some of the assumptions made about the resources to support housing, agriculture and the density proposed for housing development in his area.

In Lancaster County, 90% of the people live in Lincoln. The remaining 10% are on acreages and 4% are farmers. Lancaster County is a very diverse county. Although the second highest populated county in Nebraska, we have the most farms in any county in Nebraska and the most 4-H kids. He has concerns about restricting development in northern Lancaster County. The Raymond Central school was consolidated in the late 60's. They are far enough away from Lincoln that they don't have the development pressure that a lot of people talk about. They need more people in this area of the county. It is difficult to maintain a rural school right now. The school has been able to maintain almost all of its programs because of increasing valuations and increasing state aid. With more kids they get more help. Grimes stated that they are able to maintain the school programs through the additional real estate developments. Their church just about closed in the late 80's and early 90's, but they were able to turn that around and their attendance is increasing. But, they can't do that unless they have some development. The acreage limitations could affect agriculture in the future.

Steward inquired of Grimes as to whether he thinks it is important that we do what we can to protect the right to farm. Grimes responded in the affirmative, and he believes the 20 acre zoning is a bad deal. It wastes so much ground and you get so much interspersing of farm land with houses. His area has the water, the natural resources, and the infrastructure socially, yet they need more people to really develop that. It should be on smaller sized lots and he would favor more clustering.

Grimes did not know whether Raymond has a comprehensive plan.

Schwinn referred to p.F6 where it predicts that the number of people living on farms in Lancaster County (now 2,500), will grow to 3,600 by 2025 and to 5,000 by 2050. The staff has readily admitted that that is merely a statistical anomaly. Schwinn asked Grimes whether he believes this kind of growth is possible. Grimes believes that it will depend on what you define as a "farm". Many are part-time farms. Full time commercial farms will decrease because of development pressure and because of the economics. In his area there are some unique opportunities because they are close to a population center. It is hard to predict. However, he believes that those projections are way too high for full-time conventional commercial farms. They will decrease—not increase.

Carlson asked Grimes whether he would support people building houses in Raymond. Grimes would not be opposed, but it would be pretty hard to do. We are kind of dependent on acreage development to retain those rural communities. The development needs to be done in a manner that is orderly to be more conducive to growth of the town. The Plan needs to address the growth of small towns more. Lincoln is a part of our lives, but not all of Lancaster County is Lincoln. We really depend on those local communities for schools, girl scouts, 4-H, churches, etc. Don't forget that we need enough people to maintain our social infrastructure and to maintain our quality of life.

Schwinn asked Grimes to speak to the concept of the right of the farmer to choose what to do with his land. Grimes' response was that farming is already quite regulated so he is used to the right to farm as opposed to the right to do whatever you want. It is not a generic issue. The City is not going to arrive on his doorstep in his lifetime, but for someone that lives close to Lincoln it becomes a very difficult issue. They need the right to farm to make a living with what they have, but when they get to a point where there are houses all around them, it gets difficult to farm. Typically, a farmer doesn't own everything they farm. And a farm cannot be moved.

**14. Therron Stackley**, 1501 A Street, a small business owner and homeowner and 19 year resident of the Near South neighborhood, advocated that no new land be added to the plan. Acreage development should be encouraged no more than it is. Stackley is in favor of low taxes, job creation and affordable housing, but he does not believe adding land will achieve those goals. There are enormous costs resulting in taxpayer assessment. We have a once in a lifetime chance to encourage the creation of new neighborhoods and to make neighborhoods work, with businesses and schools in walking distance. He is excited about mixed use development. Growth in general can be good if smart and fiscally responsible.

**15. Doug Nagel**, 12505 No. 27th Street, Davey, testified in opposition to the acreage limitation of 8 houses per section. He is also opposed to the use of the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle and the Greenprint Challenge as part of the Plan. This is a zoning regulation which imposes inverse condemnation on the rural citizens. We are paying a huge price by stopping progress at No. 27 & I-80 due to 375 small beetles. (**Exhibit #11**).

Steward inquired as to the source of Nagel's information. Nagel advised that the beetle counts on the chart came from the UNL Entomology Dept.

Steward asked Nagel whether there are any water issues in his area. Nagel does not believe there are any water issues. They do have records from a well driller showing the quality of water. There are center pivots in the area that are used for irrigation. If it was salt water, they could not irrigate crops. They have been pumping millions of gallons every year to make a crop with no problems.

\*\*\* Break \*\*\*

**16. David Grant**, 1200 Branched Oak Road, Davey, Past President of the Northwest Lincoln Community Assn., testified in opposition to the rural density level of eight dwelling units per section. He has lived in Lincoln all his life and has been in the trucking industry for the past 37 years. 30 years ago, the Comprehensive Plan catch phrase was "Concentric Growth"; however, Grant believes that little has been done to foster this concept. The growth north, northwest and southwest has taken far too long compared to the growth that goes south and southeast. Grant requested that the 20 acre density regulation be maintained. Grant submitted an Assessed Valuation Comparison on 6 sections of land adjacent to his property projecting what 8 dwelling units would provide for the tax base. (**Exhibit #12**)



With regard to the right to farm, Grant believes that it should be his option to sell off a portion of his land in the event of a catastrophic illness.

Steward observed that what Grant presented is just one part of the equation—the tax side and not the cost side.

Carlson clarified that the farmstead split-off is retained in the proposed plan. Grant wants to keep his place as it is. He wants the ability to sell 20 acres off if he has to. Bills-Strand pointed out that under the farmstead rules, Grant can retain his house with 5 acres and sell off the rest.

**17. Steve Mossman**, 134 So. 13th, Suite 1200, attorney, testified as legal counsel for the Northern Lancaster Citizens for Common Sense Development. The association's main concern is with the language regarding acreage limitations to the north and some of the environmental aspects. The specific claim of the association is found on p.F74 regarding the density of 8 dwellings per square mile. The association would strongly support the statement from the minority report of the Comprehensive Plan Committee that the plan restricts new acreages to the southeast and limits availability of acreage development in the north. This policy will “balkanize” the County.

From a legal standpoint, Mossman does not believe this regulation can be enforced. Under the Nebraska statutes, counties cannot regulate, restrict or prohibit the erection, construction or use of buildings on farmsteads, and the statutes define farmsteads as 20 acres or more with over 1,000 of agricultural products produced yearly. Cities of the primary class (of which Lincoln is one) are prohibited from regulating farmsteads outside the corporate limits. The current zoning code with the 20 acre limitation reflects the limits of zoning 20 acre parcels. The Comprehensive Plan is a framework for having set up the zoning code. In Mossman's opinion, the zoning code could not reflect what the proposed Comprehensive Plan sets out on p.F74.

The association is concerned about stopping people from living on acreages if they want to. This plan will drive people into other counties. The association would support the build-through component that has been discussed.

Mossman went on to state that the historic planning policy of Lincoln-Lancaster County has always been concentric growth, and the association believes that the proposed revisions will be a detriment to the citizens.

The association would request the following amendments: 1) the language of the minority report that all property owners in Lancaster County that have AG zoning be treated the same; and 2) that the acreage development policy map on p.F73 be deleted. Mossman stated that these proposed amendments will be submitted in writing along with other amendments.

Approximately 17 members of the association stood in support of this testimony.

Carlson believes that there has been a County Attorney opinion on this 20-acre minimum in regard to the state statutes. Is Hickman in violation? Mossman knows there is a lack of clarity within the statutes and he does not know that any court decision has determined that. However, he is aware that there is a decision pending in the Nebraska Supreme Court determining the definition of a farm building.

**18. Sue Burbach**, 4220 No. 14th Street, requested that the proposed study for widening No. 14<sup>th</sup> Street be deleted from the plan. The issue is safety. There are two schools on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. The largest is Belmont Elementary. The second sits on 10<sup>th</sup> & Superior--Goodrich Middle School. The Antelope Valley project comes across and ends at 14<sup>th</sup> & Cornhusker with a loop to head traffic to the west to hook onto the Interstate. From there they want to widen 14<sup>th</sup> Street to 5 lanes for traffic that wants to go north. No one complies with the 35 mph speed limit now on 14<sup>th</sup> with 2+1 lanes. With 900 students in elementary school and the middle school, her concerns are safety issues. There is no bussing for either of these schools so there are a lot of students walking. There is a nursing home, a cemetery, a swimming pool and a lot of residences on North 14th Street. It appears that this would remove some homes on North 14th Street. There is no room on 14<sup>th</sup> for 5 lanes.

**19. Ron Herms**, 5500 Shady Hollow Rd., testified as a realtor and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Realtors Association of Lincoln. This proposal would negatively impact affordable housing and would lead to a loss of jobs and decrease the tax base for both the city and county. He urged the Commission to support an amendment that would eliminate the development priorities for Tier I; expand the amount of developable land available in Tier I and allow for more acreage development in Lancaster County; and adopt build-through design standards.

He does not know anyone who wants higher taxes. He was concerned about the growth estimates. The allusion was that the growth rate in the 90's grew at the rate of 1.6% per year. The LES average annual increase based on actual hookups shows an increase of 1.9% per year. The developable land proposed in the plan only proposes a 1.5% increase, which is not even enough to meet its own internal needs. That creates an artificial scarcity of land which tends to drive prices up. He believes the proposed density is fine. Developers should be allowed to develop increased density subdivisions where the market shows they would be receptive and where they can meet a market need, but it should not be imposed upon developers that this high density has to be how we are going to grow.

Herms is also concerned that the plan only has one page that addresses affordable housing. There are adequate programs in Lincoln that deal with the low income at 80% below the median; we have NIFA which does a good job helping first time home buyers that are above 80 to 100% of median income. His big concern is the young professionals at or above median income. The average home in Lincoln is \$130,000 right now. These people are looking to buy houses between \$90,000 and \$130,000. We're cutting out that block of young professionals with this type of approach. We're driving the cost of land up.

Relative to taxes, Herms believes that this proposal will make property taxes go up and they are already too high. Growth pays for itself. Lincoln's assessed valuation is up 76%. The tax rate

dropped from 49 cents/\$100 to only 32 cents/\$100, a 33% reduction. Sales tax revenues have increased 81%. City budget expenditures have increased 27.48%. This shows proportionately that development/growth more than pays for itself, and the reverse of that is going to have the opposite effect.

Steward asked Herms whether he believes that Lincoln currently provides a choice of diversity, economic style/type and convenience in housing. Herms stated that the general answer would be yes, but the concern is the average cost of a home is \$130,000. This is too high for that group of people to which he referred. This will discourage companies from locating here. These companies are going to go elsewhere.

Steward recalled an article in the newspaper a few weeks back which compared housing prices in Omaha to housing prices in Lincoln, and the premise is that it is easier and development is not as restricted in Omaha. Yet the average housing prices are \$30-35,000 higher in Omaha than Lincoln. Herms pointed out that Omaha has a larger population to begin with. If they were experiencing the same or smaller percentage of growth, there would be a larger number of actual houses. It creates a supply and demand issue.

**20. Ross McCown**, 1815 Y Street, Vice-President of **Nebco, Inc.**, testified in opposition to heavy industrial zoning on the north side of Hwy 34 across from Kawasaki. Nebco is developing a large residential area at 1st Street and Highway 34. The heavy industrial zoning will not be compatible with the Fallbrook development of low density residential. Fallbrook will contain a public school site and the UNL Alumni plan to develop a golf course and assisted living facility in this area. None of these uses will benefit from the proximity of heavy industrial zoning. An appropriate use of the property would be light industry, at most, and preferably highway commercial. There should be no heavy industrial zoning to the east of N.W. 27<sup>th</sup> along Hwy 34. (*Exhibit #13*)

**21. Harry Muhlbach**, 14605 No. 56th, testified in opposition to the 8 dwellings per square mile acreage provision. The acreages help protect the value of the small family farms. The 8 dwellings per square mile will devalue what these farmers thought they had in their retirement. It reduces their options of how they can sell the farm. The acreages are valuable because they help support the new agricultural center on Havelock. There are people in town that have jobs like fire and police that live on these acreages that go out in the country to get away from the people. They still need this access. This plan does not allow people that work between Lincoln and Omaha to buy acreages on the north side of Lincoln. He has talked to well drillers in Lancaster County and the water should not be an issue.

In addition, Muhlbach pointed out that the Interstate going through Lincoln is not being addressed as usable in the plan. The Plan does not show any development in the northeast part of Lancaster County. Hwy 77 north is just sitting there. The utilities that become installed are usually paid by the developer. This plan does not even address the drainage basin coming into the northern part of the county that would function on the existing sewer system.

**22. LeRoy Ang**, 5030 No. 25th Street, owns real estate on West Agnew Road. His earning power is gone. He believes he should have the right to sell 20 acres in order to support his wife and

himself, if necessary. The cost of their medication has been outrageous and they are getting close to a point where they are going to have to sell a parcel of the land. If you sell more than a parcel, the income taxes get you. You have to regulate that in order to be able to sell. If this plan is adopted, Ang believes that the school district will have problems. Mr. Grimes farms his real estate and Ang does not get enough out of it to do any more than pay for his taxes and some of his living expenses.

**23. Jim Nagel**, 11505 No. 56<sup>th</sup> Street, testified in opposition to the 8 dwelling units provision in the County. He was born in Lincoln and has lived on a farm all his life. His father has lived in northern Lancaster County since the 1920's. It was not until the 1940's that Nagel was able to buy a farm and realize his American dream. He does not agree with many of the points in the new Comprehensive Plan. He has a tough time studying it. It is poorly arranged and difficult to understand. He also believes that the plan is discriminatory on pp.F72 and F73 when it restricts development in the west, north and east areas. This is really encompassing 179,000 acres in northern Lancaster County. It's like taking away a whole area where you have decided people should not live. Some assumptions were poor water, poor roads, native prairies, etc. He cannot say this is better farming soils. This policy will drive the prices up for people who want to be on acreages.

Nagel believes we need a well-balanced plan; we need concentric growth; we don't need all people to be on one side; it is so evident that we have Lincoln right in the middle of the whole county.

With regard to the right to farm, Nagel believes he has the right to farm and should also have the right to stop farming if he so chooses.

**24. Danny Walker** responded to the comments made by the Downtown Lincoln Association. He does not understand what benefit the Antelope Valley project is going to have for the DLA. He cruises “O” Street quite often and the only thing he can see down there doing business is beer joints.

As far as multiple theater complexes, Walker suggested that nationwide they are going belly-up.

Walker went on to state that green space is very important. This does not mean car lots, gas stations, or cracker box type living spaces. Many people have testified in regard to development north of I-80. Walker cautioned that most of that land is in the floodplain. It is a very precarious area. There is a lot of fill that goes in there.

With regard to p.F10, the bridge over Wilderness Park, Walker does not understand why it is still in the plan with all of the overwhelming voice of opposition from the public. Is there a kickback involved? Walker asked the Commission to keep green space in mind.

Walker inquired as to when the Infrastructure Financing will be inserted into this Plan. Schwinn advised that it is supposed to follow the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Walker believes the Duncan report was a very good report, but it was torn to shreds without much public input.

**25. Tom Huston**, 233 So. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1900, testified on behalf of **Allen Baade** who owns 120 acres located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Rokeby Road and 82<sup>nd</sup> Street. Huston submitted copies of correspondence which was submitted to the Comprehensive Plan Committee regarding requests for consideration of this tract to be designated as low density residential. The Comprehensive Plan Committee has recommended that this property remain agricultural.

Huston referred to p.F71. This property is located in the Area B Southeast. The Area B Southeast acreage development policy identifies this area as a focus area for high acreage density. It is recognized that this area has the available water service from a rural water district. This property is adjacent to a hard surfaced road; this property is marginal as far as agricultural productivity. This property has a tangent with other proposed low density residential areas. Huston does not understand why the property is shown as AG.

Huston then referred to p.E15 which refers to the "Hickman Horizon Plan. Huston believes this is a Hickman prohibition plan prohibiting any type of development within a two-mile area of Hickman. By statute, Hickman has a one-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction. This plan attempts to expand that jurisdiction by including the "Hickman Horizon Plan" within the Comprehensive Plan. It is an indirect attempt to do what they cannot do under statute. Huston does not believe the County can delegate that authority to Hickman. There would be 40 acres of Huston's client's property in this two-mile jurisdiction of Hickman. Huston does not believe that Hickman has the legal ability to do what they are trying to do. Huston is opposed to the "Hickman Horizon Plan as it affects his client's property."  
**(Exhibit #14)**

**26. Len Schropfer**, 2315 Road S, Milligan, Nebraska, testified in opposition to the study for a highway across Wilderness Park at Yankee Hill Road. He is a small farmer in Fillmore County. He loves Lincoln. The natural Wilderness Park and buffered Salt Creek are true assets. "All of us believe Nebraskans are looking to you (the Planning Commission) to guarantee some grace and beauty to capture the Capitol Building."

**27. Joe Gabig**, 4835 Knox, testified to address the narrow issue of the use of buffers to protect the values of green space. His testimony also touched on the broader philosophies that must be selected to drive the environmental health of the community. Gabig also referred to the opinion survey of Lancaster County residents done by Sigma Group in November, 2000. The report states that, "Residents revealed a mind-set largely oriented toward preserving natural resources and existing neighborhoods as Lincoln is developed in the future." Nearly 90% of the respondents said that the city should not allow development in an area if it would impact important natural resources. Gabig urged that the community leaders should abide by what the citizens have said they want and provide for the long-term environmental and economic health of the community and surrounding land. Gabig also submitted an "Animal Inventory of Wilderness Park". **(Exhibit #15)**

**28. Tom McCormick**, 1406 D Street, testified in opposition to the proposed extension of Yankee Hill Road over Wilderness Park. This project is being pushed in a spirit of clear indifference, if not defiance, of the public will. This body should be guided by the survey findings. The majority of the comments submitted on the Planning Department Comprehensive Plan website have been opposed to this extension. There was overwhelming opposition at all of the workshops. 56 people

took the trouble to submit written comments—55 opposed, 1 in favor. Despite this loud and clear message from the people and the warnings of wildlife biologists and studies, the committee still includes it in the draft plan "for further study". This just makes it that much easier to eventually include it in the Plan with minimal public input. What is this for? Some have speculated that there may be people who are in positions of public trust and think benefitting their own investments with a road trumps the public interest.

**29. Richard Halvorsen**, 6311 Inverness Road, testified in support of relaxing the restrictions on movie theaters. He believes there is enough market for both Downtown and the outlying movie theaters.

Halvorsen supports the policy of not allowing acreages in the three-mile limit. It is ridiculous to have acreages in an area that will become close to the urban development quickly. Most of these small acreages do not pay their weight in taxes. They consume more in services than they generate tax.

Halvorsen is also opposed to the Yankee Hill Road extension over Wilderness Park and believes the study should be deleted from the Plan. Public opinion has killed it off.

**30. Charles Willnird**, 12600 So. 82<sup>nd</sup>, Roca, testified on behalf of the Lancaster County Agricultural Society. As a farm owner who lives in the country, Willnird agreed with the comments made by Mr. Grimes.

Willnird also submitted **Exhibit #16** from the Lancaster County Agricultural Society requesting that approximately 8 acres at the southeast corner of 84<sup>th</sup> and Havelock Avenue be designated as commercial. The current use for the total site is public/semi-public, i.e. the Lancaster Event Center and the Lancaster County Fair. The AG Society owns the property as a political subdivision funded through the County Board. The venues are public in nature and for education, entertainment and recreational purposes. The purpose of the request for commercial designation will allow for the future lease of three to five pad sites for businesses to complement the Event Center, i.e. motel, retail, clothing and accessories, food establishments. This would help sustain the Event Center. Other commercial/industrial designations are adjoining and nearby. Infrastructure is in place or available.

Steward inquired whether the AG Society came before this body for the original zoning of the property. Willnird advised that they did not. The buildings have been annexed. The area in the corner is still zoned AG and outside the city limits. Steward inquired whether the AG Society went through any site assessment before locating there. What were the factors for locating there? Willnird indicated that there was a willing and cooperative seller; there was already sewer available; water was available; and LES goes right through the property with a power line.

Steward inquired whether the adjacent zoning in the existing Comprehensive Plan has anything to do with this decision. Willnird stated that being adjacent to the floodplain was a plus because of the type of facility they would have. They would not be encroaching upon other development.

Carlson inquired as to why the AG Society cannot sustain itself without the pad sites. Willnird stated that this would be added income. The demand has been demonstrated, especially for a motel facility.

Carlson observed that it seems strange for the County to be a landlord for a hotel or food establishment. Willnird indicated that chain franchises would rather lease than own just because of the liability. Leasing the property would give the AG Society more control on the way the property is developed and the upkeep of the property.

**31. Jean Helms**, 3101 Prairie Road, testified in support of safety for all pedestrian and bicyclists. She stated that she is appearing in memory of her brother, Tim, who was killed while riding his bicycle. As Lincoln continues to grow, we have a responsibility to design neighborhoods that promote safe walking and biking as well as providing alternate means of transportation. Helms supports the creation of new standards and processes to assure that these forms of mobility are considered. There is a need to reduce our reliance on the automobile. Our natural resources are not infinite. We need to learn from other communities with strong examples of mass transit that are user friendly. We must use transit dollars wisely by designing neighborhoods that allow a functional mass transit system. Helms requested that there be concise and aggressive language for maintaining existing neighborhoods and creating new neighborhoods that are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists and which provide access to alternate means of transportation.

**32. Tim Knott**, 4310 Waterbury Lane, testified in support of the general concept of extending Wilderness Park. He supports the draft Plan in general. He is particularly in support of the principles for compact and contiguous growth. He supports the environmental resources chapter. There is a need to do something to preserve the natural areas of Lancaster County now. Every public opinion survey shows that the public wants growth and adequate planning to preserve the environment. Natural resources must be addressed on a county-wide basis.

Knott believes that the extension of Wilderness Park to the Hickman area makes sense. It was called for in the Comprehensive Plan and called for in the Wilderness Park Subarea Plan. Lincoln will need the green space and open space. Linear parks such as Wilderness Park are pleasing to the eye, filter noise, lights and pollutants in the air. An extended Wilderness Park could also mean higher land values for the areas surrounding the park. He believes this will bring more tax revenues. The new Homestead Trail would parallel much of the extended Wilderness Park. In the Roca area, there are some significant historic buildings and an old stage station that could be preserved.

Knott referred to p.F59, which includes a unified concept (Salt Valley Heritage Greenway) which protects the safety of Lincoln residents by preserving the floodplains as open space and recreational corridor. This provides the need of east Lincoln for a regional park. This should be kept in the plan.

Steward inquired as to whether Knott is familiar with the Sigma survey. Knott indicated that he was somewhat familiar. He believes that 400 Lincoln residents were surveyed and 100 in rural Lancaster County. The survey was done in November or December of 2000.

**33. Lyn Kathlene**, 1929 High Street, Associate Professor of Political Science and co-chair of the **Community Services Implementation Plan Transportation Coalition (C-SIP)**, addressed the transportation issues in the Plan. We need a transportation system that is integrated and accessible to all citizens of the County. Half of the residents in this city are not able to drive. They are our elderly, physically and mentally challenged, poor households that cannot afford an automobile, the new immigrant residents from countries where private automobile ownership is not the norm and do not know how to drive, and they are our children. This is not a walkable or bikeable city. We do not have a transit system that the parents themselves use and do not consider it for children. We do not have well designed and safe commuting bike routes that lead to destinations of use. We do not have the under- and over-passes at heavily trafficked streets. We have created an exclusive, inequitable, inaccessible and expensive system that privileges half of the population. Kathlene's observations, recommendations and proposed amendments to the Mobility & Transportation chapter are found on **Exhibit #17**.

**34. Nancy Loftis**, 2534 A Street, testified on behalf of the **Great Plains Trails Network**, a 31-member Board with a membership of about 890 paid family, business or individual memberships demonstrating their support for trail development in Lincoln-Lancaster County. The Great Plains Trails Network Board considered and support the revisions offered by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee which have been submitted. **Exhibit #18**

**35. Janet Doulas**, 210 Bruce Drive, testified in support of a pedestrian bridge somewhere on East "O" Street, preferably at about 63<sup>rd</sup> Street. She does not drive and needs a safe way to cross "O" Street to get to Gateway, restaurants and to buy groceries. She pointed out that the two pedestrian bridges being built to accommodate the sports enthusiasts who want to go to football and baseball games are going to cost 2.2 million dollars. She believes that a similar pedestrian bridge across "O" Street would cost \$450,000 and possibly Gateway could bear this cost since they are going to benefit the most from the expansion of "O" Street.

Douglas urged that strong mass transit language be left in the plan. For most of her destinations, she has to take two buses in one direction and then two buses back. This is very time consuming.

**36. Robert Doulas**, 210 Bruce Drive, has reviewed the draft Plan and he believes there is a serious lack of consideration for mass transit. 50% of the people in Lincoln cannot drive. Somebody is going to get killed with the "O" Street expansion. He believes the Plan does not comply with regulations in several areas. For example, the planned island on "O" Street is 4' wide. The minimum standard is supposed to be 60" so that a person in a wheelchair can safely sit on the island trying to make the cross. If you review the uniform manual of traffic control devices, you will find out that 4' per second is the minimal standard suggested by the Dept. of Roads, and that in high usage, high density traffic areas, that standard can be lengthened. Our city is suggesting 3.5' per second. This is not going to work. Bus transit in this city needs to be improved and it should be part of this Plan.

**37. Brad Loos**, 2796 South 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, testified as a representative of the National Federal of the Blind, Nebraska and Lincoln Chapter. He believes that city planning should include a good public transportation system. He remembers a time back in the 60's when the buses ran 7 days a week



until midnight. He also remembers a time when every school in Lincoln had a city bus that went to it. Charging \$1.00 per child does not encourage school kids to take the bus to school. We need to get rid of the Downtown loop system and go into a grid pattern. Loos urged the Commission to keep a good transportation system and to improve what we've got. It is important to also keep pedestrians, bicyclists and children in mind.

**38.** The Clerk submitted written testimony from **Bruce Bohrer** on behalf of the **Lincoln Chamber of Commerce (Exhibit #19)**. Bohrer will testify at the next hearing.

**39. Glenn Cekal**, 1420 "C" Street, believes that the draft Plan is loaded with problems. He is also concerned about the bicycle situation. He is opposed to the extension of Yankee Hill Road over Wilderness Park. We can't afford it. He believes there are other things that have much higher priority.

Cekal believes we need a different form of city government. He believes we need a city manager form of government where the Council people can be strong and represent their constituencies. People are discouraged to get involved because they don't think anyone listens to them.

**40. Roxanne Smith**, 711 Peach Street, testified in regard to floodplains. One must look to the past to predict the future. The past has taught us that floods will come. Clean water is important for life to continue. Please respect the integrity of the remaining floodplains. It is the Planning Commission's responsibility to plan for the social, fiscal, environmental and economic health of the citizens. Functioning floodplains contribute to all of these goals at a low cost. Open space breaks the monotony of the urban environment and contributes to mental health. Floodplains were created to hold and filter water. They offer a significant low cost method of cleaning stormwater. But most significant, by preserving floodplain and restricting development in the floodplain, you save citizens now and in the future the expense of compensating for flood damage. Please place public health and safety above personal profit. Protect the integrity of the floodplains by including them in agricultural preserves, parks and open spaces.

\*\*\* Break \*\*\*

**41. Jon C. Bedick**, 912 So. 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt. B1, is a biologist and testified as to the stream. He suggested that anything that would straighten the stream would be a bad idea. For flood control methods, the more meandering stream is going to be a better stream for that purpose. The stream also provides an incredible amount of habitat as well as flood control.

Duvall inquired as to whether Bedick knows anything about the Tiger Beetle. Bedick advised that the Tiger Beetle has been found near Arbor Lake and he guesses there is a spot quite south of the park where there may be some. The intent is to look for more remnant populations, if they are around. They have not been found in very many places.

**42. Ken Reitan**, 2310 S. Canterbury Lane, testified in support of the extension of Wilderness Park to the south, the Salt Valley Heritage Greenway, the proposals for buffers, agricultural stream corridors and protection of wetlands and prairies. However, he disagrees with the decision to have

the Yankee Hill Road over Wilderness Park as a study item. This would not be a fiscally sound decision and the public will not support it. **(Exhibit #20)**

**43. Kandra Hahn**, 1425 So. 22<sup>nd</sup>, testified in support of the environmental components of the draft Plan. She promised the Friends of Wilderness Park that she would draw special attention to the negative environmental impact of the possible extension of Yankee Hill Road through or over Wilderness Park. Hahn played a tape of traffic sounds while she was testifying. That road would carry one truck every 30 seconds. There is no substantive support or need for this road through Wilderness Park. This would essentially sever the park.

Hahn requested that the Commission embrace, adopt and preserve in its entirety the Greenprint Challenge. It is what the community wants as a whole.

Hahn also requested that the Commission adopt, recommend and protect the Salt Valley Heritage Greenway. Survey after survey supports the importance of the natural environment to ordinary people.

**44. Marge Davenport**, 602 No. 112<sup>th</sup> Street, expressed concern for the 130 acres which she owns east of Lincoln through which Stevens Creek flows. Her great grandfather homesteaded this property in 1869. Five generations have worked the land. She is currently in negotiations with the NRD which wants an easement over 110 of the 130 acres. The East Beltway borders the property on the east. "O" Street is expanding to four lanes on the south. 112<sup>th</sup> will be widened and paved. A bike trail is proposed to run along Stevens Creek. What property does that leave for her as the landowner? Does this Plan consider the wants and needs of the landowner? She does not want to share her property that is her heritage. She urged that the Commission have consideration for the landowner that is not interested in getting rich off the sale of the property. **(Exhibit #21)**

**45. Sonja Krauter**, 240 E. Cherrywood Dr., expressed concern for the 156 acres she owns in Stevens Creek. Five acres are power line easements, 80 acres are currently in negotiation with the NRD for conservation easements and approximately 30 acres are in the future proposed East Beltway. There is talk of future utility easements and future widening of "O" Street to four lanes. Now the Comprehensive Plan indicates future green space and trails along Stevens Creek through her property. With the current easement restrictions and the proposed Comprehensive Plan restrictions to her land, she still pays full property taxes. What was 156 acres one hundred years ago has been diminished to 41 acres. It surely makes her wonder about the term "private landowner". She urged that the landowners be respected and continue to have the rights of private landowners as this decision is made. **(Exhibit #22)**

**46. Marilyn McNabb**, 1701 West Rose, testified in support of the Salt Valley Heritage Greenway. The awareness of the natural surroundings rate high with people who are making choices to buy homes. She believes there is more understanding of the natural world than there was 15 years ago. She recited from a statement she found on the web from the National Association of Home Builders about Smart Growth, "Establishing a long term comprehensive plan in each local jurisdiction that makes available ample supply of land for residential, commercial, recreational and industrial uses as well as taking extra care to set aside meaningful open space and protect environmentally

sensitive areas.” The Salt Valley Heritage Greenway is critical to moving forward. It is based on good information. It was produced by a group of experts. They started with 13 categories and boiled it down to three. The wetlands, the stream corridors and the tall grass prairie need to be preserved and saved.

**47. Ted Triplett**, 4420 No. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, testified in opposition to the widening of North 14<sup>th</sup> Street. He and his neighbors are concerned that this will increase the speed limits in an established neighborhood. This area has a lot of elderly people and a lot of young families. He is concerned about safety of the children. There are two schools that will be affected—Belmont Elementary and Goodrich Middle School. There is also a nursing home on North 14<sup>th</sup> Street. He is also concerned about property values because a 5-lane in front of his house will decrease his property value and the aesthetics of his property.

**48. Jacqueline Barnhardt**, 1010 Sumner, stated that she is overall impressed with the proposed Plan and appreciates the efforts by the committees and citizens. She supports the Salt Valley Heritage Greenway plan. She chooses to live in a neighborhood where she can walk or bike to work. She does have safety concerns about biking downtown. It is not safe and certainly not safe for children. She supports the bike lanes and suggested that a task force be appointed to design practical and safe bike lanes. There needs to be a lot of thought put into the bike lanes. They cannot be put in as an after-thought.

Barnhardt is also concerned about expanding the city. We need to be cautious about adding so many square miles. More expansion means less money to support the inner city.

Barnhardt is opposed to the study for a road through Wilderness Park.

**49. Bob Ruskamp**, 4200 No. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, testified in opposition to the widening of North 14<sup>th</sup> Street. This is a residential neighborhood. Our homes are there, our schools are there, we have a church and a cemetery there. This is our community. Ruskamp requested that the Commission direct the staff to focus on how to make arrangements to route thru traffic around neighborhoods on major streets rather than through established neighborhoods.

**50. Susie Dunn**, 4000 Garfield Street, expressed concern about Wilderness Park and about the transportation component of the Plan. She is concerned that the draft Plan addresses mostly auto issues. That is neither sustainable, equitable or even environmentally sound. In order to make Lincoln a city where everyone is welcome, it needs to be a city where it is easy to get around. We need a well-developed multi-modal transportation system so that everybody can have access to jobs, entertainment, churches, schools, etc. For Lincoln to become as dominant and as dependent on the auto leaves people like Dunn, who chooses not to drive, dependent on public transit and on the grace of good people to provide rides when transit doesn't run. She wants to have some choice about how and where she gets to things by using bikes and her feet. She wants Lincoln to be a city that she can grow old in because it has thought about other things than being dominated by the automobile. It is economically, environmentally and socially responsible to do so.

Newman asked Dunn whether she has read the January draft of the Plan. Dunn indicated that she had access to it and she was more comfortable with the transportation section in the January draft. It was more inclusive and seemed to address more transportation issues other than the automobile.

**51. Jim Burden**, 7000 N.W. 27<sup>th</sup> Street, testified in support of PRT (Personal Rapid Transit), which was originally thought of in 1884. Burden believes that automated guideway systems should replace all transportation systems today.

**52. Jack Nagel**, 4100 Rock Creek Road, testified in support of the existing 20-acre minimum. He farms about 2000 acres one mile north of Davey Road. He testified that there is a lot of water in the northern part of the county. He believes the 8 dwelling units per 80 acres will put affordability out of range for a lot of people. Nagel referred to three parcels that sold recently in Saunders County: a 9.4 acre tract sold for \$3,400/acre; a 20-acre tract sold for \$1975/acre; and a 40-acre tract sold for \$1775/acre. These properties were in close proximity to each other and close to the Rock Creek watershed.

With regard to the Tiger Beetle, Nagel would encourage that the 500' buffer around the wetlands be maintained with no building in that 500'. The Tiger Beetle survives in the salt wetlands. When you lower the temperature of the soil, you are destroying the habitat. The City has let cattails grow in these areas, which destroy the temperature of the soil and these insects.

Steward commented that land is valued for reasons other than size. Nagel added that when you get up north, you've got some of the best views of Lincoln in the world. Nagel believes view adds value.

**53. Gary Hellerich**, Valparaiso, testified regarding the Guiding Principles for Rural Areas, pp.F71-F74. He owns farm land in the northern and western parts of Lancaster County. He believes it is wrong to designate the north half of Lancaster County for a very low density housing. We need the same designation throughout the county. He is sure people in the northern half of the county can implement a water district if it is needed. As far as paved roads, this is a Plan for the future. If paved roads are needed, he believes people are capable of getting funds to pave the roads. The people in northern and western Lancaster County are just as capable as the people in the eastern and southern parts of Lancaster County. Hellerich urged that the Plan must treat all rural areas in a like manner for housing density. **(Exhibit #23)**

**54. Lynette Nelson**, 15000 No. 27<sup>th</sup>, Davey, testified in support of higher density for the rural areas in northern Lancaster County. She and her husband farm on North 27<sup>th</sup> & Raymond Road and on No. 40<sup>th</sup> and Waverly Road. She does not understand where the problem about no water comes from. They have a pivot which irrigates 160 acres. There are three pivots within a mile of their property, and eight of nine pivots within a 4-mile radius of their property, all pumping 1,000 gpm. We keep pushing people further and further away from the areas we want to develop. On the north side of town we have easy access to the interstate, the airport and UNL. She does not believe the Comprehensive Plan should treat the people on the north side of town any differently.

**55. Foster Collins**, 2100 Calvert, testified on behalf of the **Blue Stem Group of Sierra Club**, in support of the contiguous growth objectives of the Plan and urged that the Commission not dilute these objectives by expanding the Tier I or removing the priority designations. These objectives will encourage fiscally responsible sustainable growth. This Plan will support the viability of Downtown and protect existing neighborhoods and still provide for orderly expansion. The Blue Stem Group would like to encourage development of more commuter bike roads to complement the recreational trail system. Collins supports the limitations on the new acreage developments. The Comprehensive Plan identifies adequate land for acreage development. The Blue Stem Group especially supports the environmental resources chapter. The Greenprint Challenge is a wonderful resource. The core resource imperatives identified must be protected: saline and fresh water wetlands, native prairies and riparian areas. These are our natural heritage and help create our sense of place. We should provide for buffers around them to preserve their integrity as working ecological systems. The Wilderness Park Subarea Plan is included in the Comprehensive Plan and it should remain. It represents a comprehensive study of the park and guide for future management. The Sigma Group survey showed that about 80% of Lincoln and Lancaster County residents support preservation of sensitive environmental areas even if it might mean a possible tax increase.

Collins stated that there is lack of money, no documented proof of need and lack of support for the Yankee Hill Road bridge study.

**56. Alvin Lugn**, 2100 Calvert Street, appeared on behalf of the Citizens Transportation Coalition and urged the planners to consider more emphasis on public transit. The CTC will be coming forward with a position paper on the Comprehensive Plan towards the end of this month.

**57. Bill Siefert**, a member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, submitted his comments in writing (**Exhibit #24**). He strongly supports the independent study regarding acreages in order to better manage the land use policy. He strongly encourages development in small towns. There is a need to focus on the long term impact of the land use policy, and to develop a clear acreage policy without inherent conflicts.

### **Staff questions**

Newman inquired whether a property owner pays normal tax if a conservation easement is put on their land. Mike DeKalb of the Planning staff advised that if a conservation easement is purchased, it is filed and recorded and reflected at the County Assessor's office, and the value is adjusted accordingly.

Bills-Strand wondered whether it is unusual for the city, state or county to own land that they lease to businesses. Stephen Henrichsen of Planning staff offered to look into the issue and provide more detail at the next meeting. Schwinn noted Valentino's in the County-City Building as an example. Duvall noted the parking garage.

Steward inquired about the process for submitting amendments. Schwinn advised that any staff amendments or other amendments that come forward will be posted on the website and will be available to the public. The deadline for submitting written amendments is Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, at 12:00 Noon.

Carlson requested more research on the older areas with regard to roads and transportation.

Bills-Strand inquired about the island width and time for crossing “O” Street. Roger Figard of Public Works advised that it is a state project for which the city did the design, so he is sure it meets the designs standards. The crossing time is done by making sure there is a minimum amount of time in the signal timing to allow that to occur.

Newman indicated that she will be bringing several amendments forward for the transportation chapter, specifically the 2+1 and merging the January draft as it deals with pedestrians, bicycles and transit.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

This public hearing will be continued on Wednesday, March 27, 2002, beginning at 1:00 p.m. The sign-up sheet for public testimony will be available at 12:30 p.m. The deadline for submitting written comments and proposed amendments is Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Walker, Administrative Officer  
Planning Department

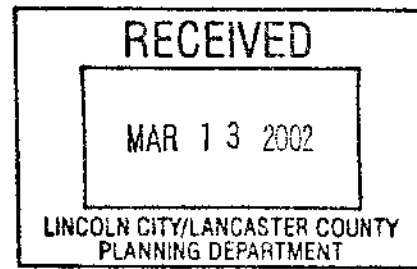
# Memorandum

March 12, 2002

TO: Planning Commission and Mayor Don Wesely

FR: Mayor's Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee

RE: Review of the City-County Planning Commission Review Draft of the Proposed Comprehensive Plan



The purpose of this memo is to provide recommendations regarding revisions to the proposed City-County Comprehensive Plan for review by the Planning Commission.

The Mayor's Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee has reviewed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Sections of the Mobility and Transportation element as well as the Environmental Resources and Financial elements of the proposed Comprehensive Plan and have identified the following proposed revisions:

□ *MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION - Bicycle and Trails Standards (page F 95)*

Add the following text:

**Bicycle and Trails Standards**

The community has an existing system of bicycle trails and on-street bike-routes. The present system serves both commuter and recreational bicyclists. The future system should include a combination of bicycle trails, bike routes, and bicycle lanes. **Planning for future bike trails should be guided by the goal of having a bike trail within one mile of all residences in the city.**

**Strategies: Bicycles in the Downtown**

Amend the text as follows:

- Develop and implement a Downtown Bicycle Facilities Plan. This plan shall include north-south and east-west bicycle lanes. **Identify and develop at least one north-south and one east-west corridor to pilot dedicated bike lanes within one year of the Downtown Bicycle Facilities plan approval.**
- ~~• Identify at least one north-south and one east-west corridor to pilot a dedicated painted bike lane, and have installed within one year of Plan approval.~~

**Strategies: Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Standards**

- Explore opportunities to develop trails within rail corridors proposed to be abandoned as an interim transportation use.
- Explore opportunities to combine trails within active rail corridors where linkages are needed, and rail traffic volume is low.



- **Develop an interconnected system of trails that primarily utilizes drainage channel and greenway corridors. Trail routes adjoining major streets should only be considered in establishing trail connections over ridgelines between drainage basins.**
- **Consider the location and alignment of trails in reviewing development applications. Request that the platform for trails be graded in conjunction with the associated development.**

#### *ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES*

##### **Core Resource Imperatives (Page F 57)**

Add diagrammatic map depicting Core Resource Imperatives (“composite map”) from page 62 of the Greenprint Challenge report.

##### **Greenways and Open Space: Salt Valley Heritage Greenway (pages F 62 and F 63)**

Replace the first paragraph under this section with the following four paragraphs:

**The Salt Valley Heritage Greenway is a proposed continuous open space “loop” around Lincoln providing a connection with both the urban and rural communities. The Greenway is envisioned to be comprised of conservation easements and fee simple acquisition of selected sites with unique environmental features or recreational opportunities. It would include parks and open space, trails, both active and resource-based recreation, riparian and stream corridors, floodplains, saline and freshwater wetlands, agricultural land, signature landscapes, wildlife corridors, lakes and streams, abandoned rail lines, and transportation corridors. It could be as narrow as a few hundred feet in some places to as wide as a mile around state recreation areas.**

**This corridor would include the Crescent Green linear greenway along Salt Creek beginning on the north and then proceeding along Salt Creek along the west and including Wilderness Park. It would proceed south of Wilderness Park along the Salt Creek floodplain connecting with the community of Roca. It would follow the Hickman Branch south of Roca and proceed east connecting with the community of Hickman. From Hickman, the corridor would proceed easterly connecting with Wagon Train SRA. From Wagon Train SRA, the corridor would proceed north up the Wagon Train Lake tributary to the south beltway. Following linear open space along the south beltway east and then north along the east beltway to the Stevens Creek connection near Walton. The Greenway would follow the Steven’s Creek corridor to the north and connect back in with Salt Creek including saline wetlands and Salt Creek Tiger Beetle habitat and the Crescent Green Corridor on the north, forming a continuous open space system.**

**The Salt Valley Heritage Greenway would provide connectivity with current and future green corridors that extend out from Lincoln such as the MoPac Trail corridor, Murdock Trail corridor, Antelope Valley, Dietrich Bikeway, and Antelope Creek Trail Corridor. It would provide a destination for additional trails as Lincoln continues to grow. The Greenway would also provide access to green corridors that then would**



extend from it out into the county to State Recreation Areas (SRA) and natural resource areas and beyond including the following:

Cardwell Branch corridor to Yankee Hill SRA  
Middle Creek corridor to Pawnee SRA  
Haines Branch corridor to Conestoga SRA  
Salt Creek corridor to Killdeer and Bluestem SRA  
Oak Creek corridor to Branched Oak Lake  
Salt Creek corridor east and up the Rock Creek corridor

The Salt Valley Heritage Greenway would also provide connectivity with the Homestead Trail that goes to Beatrice and south to Kansas. It would connect with additional rail lines that are acquired for trails in the future.

*ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES – Salt Valley Heritage Greenway & Countywide Trails Framework* (page F 64)

Add a map depicting the corporate limits of Lincoln and associated urban growth areas, and a trails framework for the entire county that reinforces the relationship between the proposed “Salt Valley Heritage Greenway” and the Countywide Trails Framework.

*FINANCIAL RESOURCES – Parks and Trails* (page F 150)

Revise the text as follows:

Establish a mandatory park land ~~and trail~~ dedication requirement for residential plats, and a **trail dedication requirement for residential plats and commercial developments.**

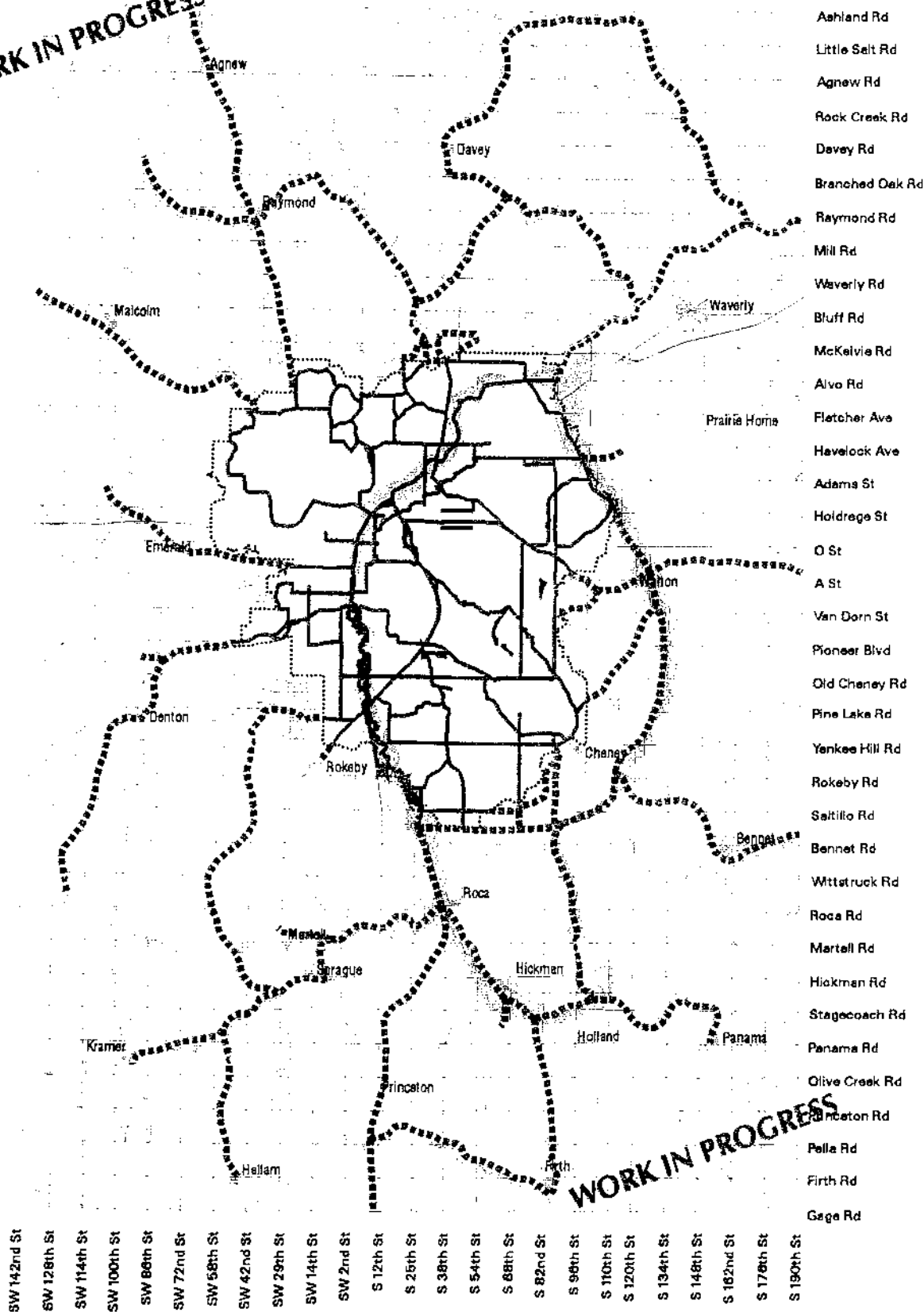
*FINANCIAL RESOURCES – Parks and Trails* (page F150)

**Parks and Trails**

Add the following text:

- **Consider a variety of measures to assist in acquisition of land for parks and open space such as an open space bond issue and associated purchase of develop rights (PDR) program, a transfer of development rights (TDR) program, real estate excise tax (REET), and open space taxation classification.**

WORK IN PROGRESS



## Salt Valley Heritage Greenway and Countywide Trails Framework

- Future County Trails
- CPC Future Service Limit
- Heritage Greenway



**REALTORS® Association of Lincoln**  
**Multiple Listing Service Statistics**  
**for Lot Sales in growth areas**  
**1998 & 2001**

**Common Criteria:**

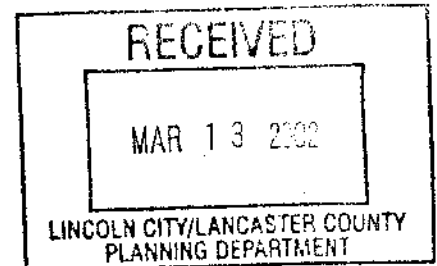
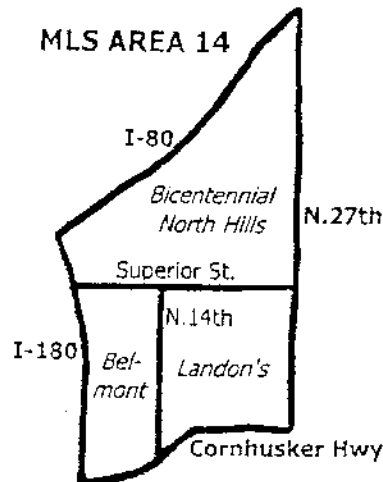
Sold (closed sales)

Price: \$1,000 - \$120,000

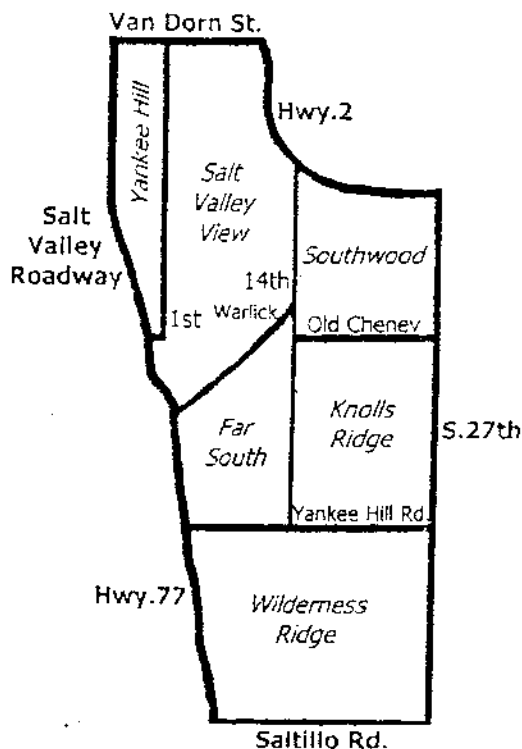
Lot: 1-acre or less AND R-1, R-2, or R-3

| for Lot Sales in growth areas | Minimum  | % Increase Minimum | Maximum   | % Increase Maximum | Average  | % Increase Average | Median   | % Increase Median |
|-------------------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Area 14 - 1998                | \$9,000  |                    | \$22,500  |                    | \$19,729 |                    | \$21,500 |                   |
| Area 14 - 2001                | \$19,000 | 111%               | \$36,500  | 62%                | \$29,448 | 49%                | \$32,250 | 50%               |
| Area 35 - 1998                | \$20,000 |                    | \$59,950  |                    | \$36,522 |                    | \$36,000 |                   |
| Area 35 - 2001                | \$30,600 | 53%                | \$75,000  | 25%                | \$42,712 | 17%                | \$40,500 | 13%               |
| Area 45 - 1998                | \$16,200 |                    | \$50,000  |                    | \$29,390 |                    | \$25,000 |                   |
| Area 45 - 2001                | \$37,500 | 131%               | \$120,000 | 140%               | \$68,853 | 134%               | \$67,450 | 170%              |

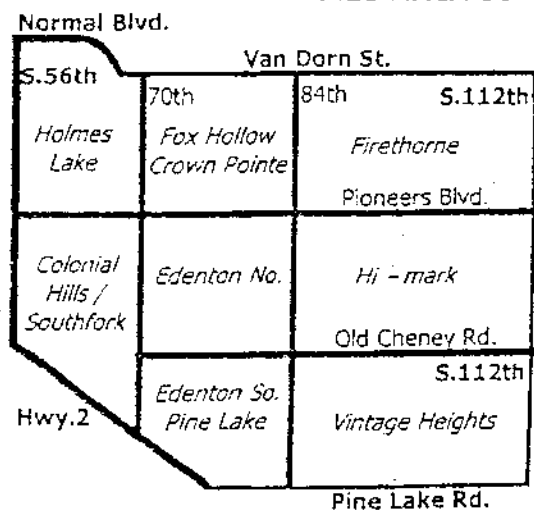
**MLS AREA 14**



**MLS AREA 45**



**MLS AREA 35**



**LINCOLN ELECTRIC SYSTEM**  
**HISTORICAL YEAR-END CUSTOMER COUNTS BY REVENUE CLASS (1990 THROUGH 2000)**

| <u>Year</u>                     | <u>Month</u> | <u>Active Residential</u> |      | <u>Active Commercial</u> |      | <u>Active Industrial</u> |       | <u>Active STRLGHT</u> | <u>Active PUBLIC</u> | <u>Active TOTAL</u> | <u>Annual Growth</u> | <u>Percent Growth</u> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1990                            | 12           | 80,624                    |      | 10,293                   |      | 209                      |       | 31                    | 1,012                | 92,169              | 2,006                |                       |
| 1991                            | 12           | 81,902                    | 1.6% | 10,532                   | 2.3% | 230                      | 10.0% | 31                    | 1,141                | 93,836              | 1,667                | 1.8%                  |
| 1992                            | 12           | 83,546                    | 2.0% | 10,712                   | 1.7% | 232                      | 0.9%  | 29                    | 1,183                | 95,702              | 1,866                | 2.0%                  |
| 1993                            | 12           | 84,828                    | 1.5% | 10,836                   | 1.2% | 224                      | -3.4% | 29                    | 1,218                | 97,135              | 1,433                | 1.5%                  |
| 1994                            | 12           | 86,576                    | 2.1% | 11,061                   | 2.1% | 229                      | 2.2%  | 28                    | 1,231                | 99,125              | 1,990                | 2.0%                  |
| 1995                            | 12           | 88,115                    | 1.8% | 11,210                   | 1.3% | 234                      | 2.2%  | 28                    | 1,262                | 100,849             | 1,724                | 1.7%                  |
| 1996                            | 12           | 90,126                    | 2.3% | 11,486                   | 2.5% | 230                      | -1.7% | 28                    | 1,289                | 103,159             | 2,310                | 2.3%                  |
| 1997                            | 12           | 92,329                    | 2.4% | 11,757                   | 2.4% | 256                      | 11.3% | 28                    | 1,298                | 105,668             | 2,509                | 2.4%                  |
| 1998                            | 12           | 94,018                    | 1.8% | 12,099                   | 2.9% | 242                      | -5.5% | 27                    | 1,295                | 107,681             | 2,013                | 1.9%                  |
| 1999                            | 12           | 95,762                    | 1.9% | 12,391                   | 2.4% | 233                      | -3.7% | 27                    | 1,314                | 109,727             | 2,046                | 1.9%                  |
| 2000                            | 12           | 97,449                    | 1.8% | 12,892                   | 4.0% | 231                      | -0.9% | 26                    | 1,318                | 111,916             | 2,189                | 2.0%                  |
| Average Annual Growth 1990-2000 |              | <u>1.9%</u>               |      | <u>2.3%</u>              |      | <u>1.1%</u>              |       |                       |                      |                     |                      | <u>2.0%</u>           |

STRLGHT: Street Light Customers  
PUBLIC: Public Authority and Governmental Customers



*"Many of the results contained in this report challenge the conventional wisdom about metropolitan densities and sprawl in the United States."*



## CENTER ON URBAN & METROPOLITAN POLICY

# Who Sprawls Most? How Growth Patterns Differ Across the U.S.

William Fulton, Rolf Pendall, Mai Nguyen, and Alicia Harrison<sup>1</sup>

### Findings

An analysis of the density trends in every metropolitan area in the United States between 1982 and 1997 reveals:

- Most metropolitan areas in the United States are adding urbanized land at a much faster rate than they are adding population. Between 1982 and 1997, the amount of urbanized land in the United States increased by 47 percent, from approximately 51 million acres in 1982 to approximately 76 million acres in 1997. During this same period, the nation's population grew by only 17 percent. Of the 281 metropolitan areas included in this report, only 17 (6.0 percent) became more dense.
- The West is home to some of the densest metropolitan areas in the nation. In 1997, ten of the 15 densest metropolitan areas in the nation were located in California, Nevada, and Arizona. The South is accommodating a great deal of population growth but is urbanizing a large amount of previously non-urban land to do so, while in the Northeast and Midwest, slow-growing metropolitan areas have consumed extremely large amounts of land for urbanization in order to accommodate very small quantities of population growth.
- Metropolitan areas tend to consume less land for urbanization—relative to population growth—when they are growing rapidly in population, rely heavily on public water and sewer systems, and have high levels of immigrant residents. Our analysis revealed that fast-growing regions urbanize far less land per new resident than slow-growing or declining ones. Regions are less likely to consume large amounts of land (relative to population growth) if they have more immigrants—this finding was one of the strongest and most consistent relationships we found, both at one point in time (1997) and as a change over time (1982-97).
- Metropolitan areas tend to consume more land for urbanization—again, relative to population growth—if they are already high-density metro areas and if they have fragmented local governments. Regions that were very dense in 1982 tended to urbanize more land in relation to population growth. That is, a region that was dense already had a harder time retaining its density during this period. We also found that regions with fragmented local government structures urbanized more land to accommodate population growth.

*"The most important conclusion this report draws is that metropolitan areas in different parts of the country are growing in different ways."*

## I. Introduction

**T**his paper measures recent trends in how rapidly American metropolitan areas are consuming land for urbanization in order to accommodate a changing population. It is the first national study to measure the consumption of land for urbanization in comparison to population growth for every metropolitan area in the United States. Our report includes both an exploration of density and density change in the U.S. and an explanation of the differences among metropolitan areas.

We calculate the density of every metropolitan area in the United States between 1982 and 1997 and analyze the resulting trends. Density is defined as the population (estimated from the decennial census) divided by the urbanized land (derived from the National Resources Inventory's national survey of land use, conducted every five years.) Thus, this is the first nationwide study that analyzes metropolitan density based on an actual measurement of urbanized land, rather than the Census Bureau's definition of "urbanized area," which does not measure actual land use.

In general, we find that, in percentage terms, most metropolitan areas are consuming land for urbanization much more rapidly than they are adding population. In that sense, most U.S. metro areas are "sprawling" more rapidly today than they have in the past. That fact is generally known. However, many of the results contained in this report challenge the conventional wisdom about metropolitan densities and sprawl in the United States.

For example, this report finds that many of the densest metropolitan areas in the United States are located in the West—most specifically, in California, Arizona, and Nevada. Meanwhile, the older metropolitan areas of the Northeast and Midwest—while their underlying densities are

high by national standards—are sprawling far worse than their counterparts elsewhere in the nation.

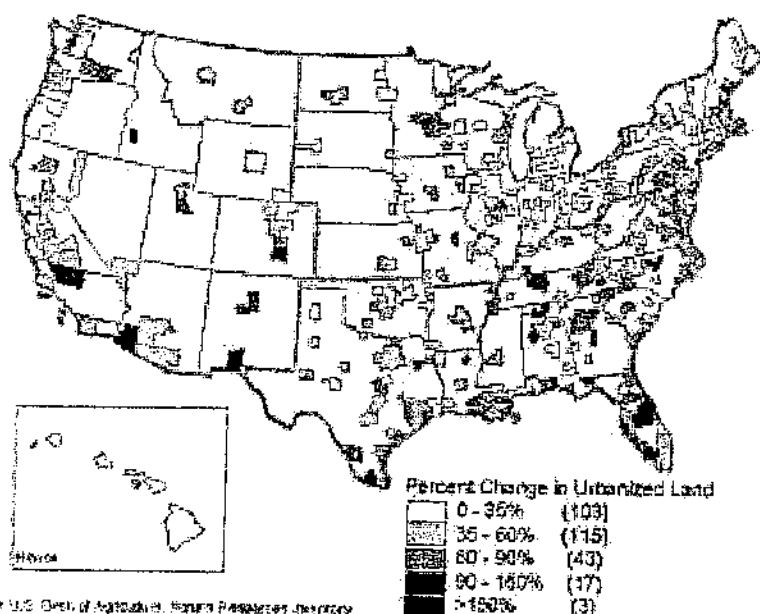
These results challenge the conventional wisdom, which believes that Western cities are sprawling because they are auto-oriented, and older Northeastern and Midwestern cities are dense because they are dense in the aging core. In some sense, the conventional wisdom is correct. Western cities are auto oriented—that is, they do not have extremely dense old cores and they are built at densities that make it difficult to provide public transit alternatives. And in the Northeast and Midwest, older core areas continue to function at very high densities by national standards. They contain densely developed neighborhoods and business districts, and they often include a very high level of public transportation riders compared to national averages.

But at the scale of the metropolitan area, the conventional wisdom is wrong—at least so far as consumption of land for urbanization is concerned.

Metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest are consuming land at a much greater rate than they are adding population, and so their "marginal" density is extremely low. (Although they are adding population, Southern metro areas also have low marginal densities.) At the same time, the auto-oriented metropolitan areas of the West have overall metropolitan densities that are comparable to those in the Northeast and the Midwest. Furthermore, they are currently growing at much higher densities than their counterparts anywhere else in the nation. In that sense, the Western metro areas—whatever else their characteristics may be—are using less land to accommodate population growth than metro areas in any other part of the nation.

In reviewing these results it is important to understand that this report seeks to measure sprawl in terms of consumption of land

Map 1  
Percent Change in Urbanized Land, MSAs and CMSAs, 1982–1997



resources only. The most important conclusion this report draws is that metropolitan areas in different parts of the country are growing in different ways. There is no single problem of “sprawl” in the United States today, and there is no single solution. Rather, the problems associated with metropolitan growth throughout the nation are characterized by regional differences, and policy responses should be different as well.

## II. Definitions and Methods

### A. “Sprawl” as a measurement of land consumed for urbanization

“Sprawl” is an elusive term. To paraphrase the United States Supreme Court’s long-ago ruling on pornography, most people can’t define sprawl—but they know it when they see it. To some, it means a pattern of auto-oriented suburban development. To others, it means low-density residential subdivisions on the metro-

politan fringe. To many—especially in the popular press—it is simply a catch-all term that refers to any kind of suburban-style growth, whether driven by population increase or not.

Our method of defining sprawl is to characterize it simply in terms of land resources consumed to accommodate new urbanization. If land is being consumed at a faster rate than population growth, then a metropolitan area can be characterized as “sprawling.” If population is growing more rapidly than land is being consumed for urbanization, then a metropolitan area can be characterized as “densifying.”

This definition is not perfect by any means, simply because sprawl has so many different meanings. But it does provide a useful baseline of sprawl as it relates to the land resources of our nation and its metropolitan areas. By using this simple and comprehensive definition, information about metropolitan densities can provide a rudimentary understanding of sprawling patterns of

urbanization and how they affect the consumption and use of land.

### B. “Density” as a measurement of land consumption and population growth

In this report, we measure the relationship between population and urbanized land in terms of what we call a metropolitan area’s “density.” We define “density” as the population of a metropolitan area divided by the amount of urbanized land in that metropolitan area. In addition to reporting on density trends in 281 of the 282 U.S. metro areas (all but Anchorage, Alaska) between 1982 and 1997, we also report on overall trends in land urbanization and sometimes describe the trends by comparing the percentage increase in population and the percentage increase in urbanized land (simply a different way of expressing the same data contained in our calculation of “density”).

It is important to note that our measurement here is not simply a measurement of residential density (as so often occurs in the sprawl debate) but, rather, a measurement of overall density based on all the land—residential, commercial, industrial, roads and highways, urban parks, and so forth—urbanized in order to accommodate population growth.

### C. Using an actual measurement of land consumption to measure sprawl and density

Furthermore, this report differs from other analyses of metropolitan densities by calculating densities based on an actual measurement of urbanized land, rather than a measurement of population density.

Most similar analyses have used the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition of “urbanized area” as the denominator in calculating urban or metropolitan densities. But the Census “urbanized area” is not a measurement of actual land use or the conversion of land. Rather, it is a measurement of popula-

tion density. Any area with a population density of 1,000 persons per square mile—that is, 1,000 persons for every 640 acres—is considered urbanized. This definition overlooks low-density suburbs, as well as areas that may accommodate urbanized land uses but not residents.

This report is based on a national survey that measures the actual use of land, rather than population density. That survey, the National Resources Inventory (NRI), is conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture every five years, most recently in 1997. The NRI estimates the amount of urbanized land in every county in the United States outside Alaska. By aggregating this data, we can obtain reasonable estimates of urbanized land in 281 of the 282 metropolitan areas (all but Anchorage) as defined by the Census Bureau for the years 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1997. To calibrate the populations of metropolitan areas to the urbanized land estimates, we interpolated a population estimate for each metropolitan area from the decennial censuses in 1980, 1990, and 2000. We also used multiple regression to explore predictors of density, density change and urbanization.

A more detailed discussion of our methodology can be found in Appendix A.

### III. Findings

#### *A. Most metropolitan areas in the United States are adding urbanized land at a much faster rate than they are adding population.*

Between 1982 and 1997, the amount of urbanized land in the United States increased by 47 percent, from approximately 51 million acres in 1982 to approximately 76 million acres in 1997. During this same period, the nation's population grew by only 17 percent.

In the five-year intervals during this period, the nation's consumption of land for urban use went up. Between

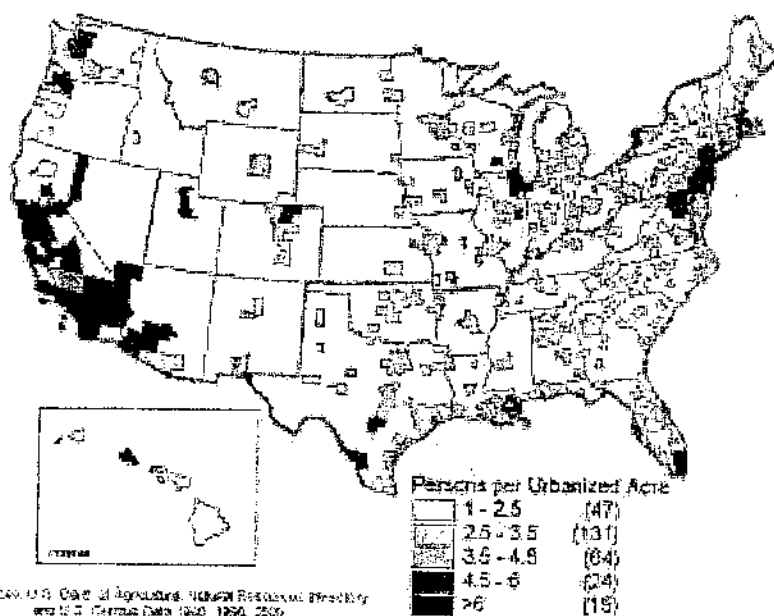
**Table 1: Fastest and Slowest Growing Metropolitan Areas, by Percent Change in Urbanized Land, 1982-1997**

| Fastest Urbanizing Metropolitan Areas |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Rank                                  | Increase in Urbanized Land          |
| 1                                     | Las Cruces, NM*                     |
| 2                                     | Pueblo, CO*                         |
| 3                                     | Naples, FL                          |
| 4                                     | Decatur, AL                         |
| 5                                     | Yuma, AZ                            |
| 6                                     | Bakersfield, CA                     |
| 7                                     | Macon-Warner Robins, GA             |
| 8                                     | Boise City, ID                      |
| 9                                     | Portland, ME                        |
| 10                                    | Fort Walton Beach, FL               |
| 11                                    | Nashville, TN                       |
| 12                                    | Tuscaloosa, AL                      |
| 13                                    | Athens, GA                          |
| 14                                    | Huntsville, AL                      |
| 15                                    | Tyler, TX                           |
| 16                                    | McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX        |
| 17                                    | Raleigh-Durham, NC                  |
| 18                                    | Tallahassee, FL                     |
| 19                                    | Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL           |
| 20                                    | Orlando, FL                         |
| Slowest Urbanizing Metropolitan Areas |                                     |
| Rank                                  | Increase in Urbanized Land          |
| 1                                     | Grand Forks, ND                     |
| 2                                     | Poughkeepsie, NY                    |
| 3                                     | Davenport-Rock Island-Moline, IA-IL |
| 4                                     | Dubuque, IA                         |
| 5                                     | Texarkana, TX-Texarkana, AR         |
| 6                                     | Jamestown-Dunkirk, NY               |
| 7                                     | Lincoln, NE                         |
| 8                                     | Anderson, IN                        |
| 9                                     | Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY           |
| 10                                    | Casper, WY                          |
| 11                                    | Waterloo-Cedar Falls, IA            |
| 12                                    | Greeley, CO                         |
| 13                                    | Sioux City, IA-NE                   |
| 14                                    | Fargo-Moorhead, ND-MN               |
| 15                                    | Enid, OK                            |
| 16                                    | Terre Haute, IN                     |
| 17                                    | Great Falls, MT                     |
| 18                                    | Battle Creek, MI                    |
| 19                                    | La Crosse, WI                       |
| 20                                    | Dayton-Springfield, OH              |

\*These extremely large increases may be due to a sampling error



Map 2  
Density, MSAs and CMSAs, 1997



1982 and 1987, the nation added approximately 6.1 million acres of urbanized land, an increase of 11.9 percent. Between 1987 and 1992, the nation added approximately 7.3 million acres of urbanized land, an increase of 12.6 percent. Between 1992 and 1997, the figure rose dramatically. During this last period, the nation added approximately 11 million acres of urbanized land, an increase of 16.7 percent.

The metropolitan density of the United States declined from 5.00 persons per urbanized acre in 1982 to 4.22 persons per urbanized acre in 1997—a decline of 0.78 persons per acre, or 15.7 percent. This decline increased during the 1990s; from 1992 to 1997, densities declined by 0.31 persons per acre, compared to 0.22 persons per acre in 1982-1987 and 0.26 persons per acre in 1987-1992. Density in non-metropolitan counties is dropping more rapidly than that in metropolitan areas. As a consequence, urban land density nationwide

dropped by over 20 percent, from 4.46 to 3.55 persons per urbanized acre between 1982 and 1997.

Not surprisingly given this overall trend, the vast majority of metropolitan areas experienced a significant decline in metropolitan density and therefore can be described as sprawling. Of the 281 metropolitan areas included in this report, only 17 (6.0 percent) either increased in density or held steady.

Fast-growing metropolitan areas are, as one might expect, adding significant amounts of urbanized land. But many metropolitan areas that are among the leaders in land urbanization are not adding population rapidly—or are adding population much more slowly than they are adding urbanized land.

For example, among the top 25 metro areas in the nation in land urbanization between 1982 and 1997 were Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, all of which urbanized between 100,000 and 300,000 acres

of land despite only slight increases, or even decreases, in population.

To be sure, some metro areas that added large amounts of population in a land-efficient way also urbanized large amounts of land. For example, Los Angeles urbanized more than 400,000 acres during this period, while Seattle and San Francisco urbanized more than 200,000 acres. But in these three cases, the percentage increase in population between 1982 and 1997 was almost the same as, or greater than, the percentage increase in urbanized land.

More typically, the biggest land urbanizers in the nation were fast-growing metropolitan areas that were adding large amounts of population in a land-hungry manner. Atlanta increased its population by 60 percent but increased its urbanized land by 80 percent, adding 571,000 acres of urbanized land between 1982 and 1997. Several other metro areas that ranked among the national leaders in new acres urbanized did, indeed, increase their population significantly, but the population growth did not keep pace with the urbanization of land. Among these metro areas were Minneapolis and Charlotte (almost 300,000 acres each), Nashville and Tampa (200,000 acres each), and Raleigh and Orlando (approximately 150,000 acres each).

#### *B. The West is home to some of the densest metropolitan areas in the nation.*

The most striking single finding of this report is the dramatic difference in metropolitan growth patterns in different regions of the country. Many metro areas in the West are continuing to “densify” or hold densities steady—meaning they are urbanizing land in an efficient manner while accommodating large amounts of population growth. Meanwhile, the South, with some exceptions, is urbanizing land at a somewhat faster rate than it is adding population (even though it is

adding population rapidly); the Northeast and Midwestern metro areas are consuming large amounts of land for urbanization even though their populations are, for the most part, stagnant or growing slowly.

Of course, many older metro areas in the Northeast and Midwest still have high overall metropolitan densities by national standards. However, many metro areas in the West now have overall densities approximately equal to the older metro areas in the Northeast and Midwest. On a regional basis, the West's overall metropolitan density is approximately the same as that of the Northeast and is measurably higher than that of the Midwest. (For details on the density, change in population, and change in urbanized land for each census region and the metropolitan areas it contains, see Appendix B.)

**The West:** A growth pattern that runs counter to the national trend of decreasing densities

The West is experiencing a fundamentally different type of metropolitan growth than any other region of the country. Although much of the West is auto-oriented and characterized by single-family residential development, the region is consuming land far more efficiently than any other part of the nation. In 1997, the West as a region had the highest metropolitan density (4.85 persons per urbanized acre) of any region in the nation, exceeding even the average metropolitan density of the Northeast (4.51 persons per urbanized acre). Among the U.S. Census Bureau's subregions, the Pacific Coast (California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington) had by far the highest average density (5.76 persons per urbanized acre), significantly outstripping the Middle Atlantic States (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), which had an average metropolitan density of 4.54 persons per urbanized acre.

Between 1982 and 1997, the West's population increased by approximately

Table 2: Highest and Lowest Density Metropolitan Areas, 1997

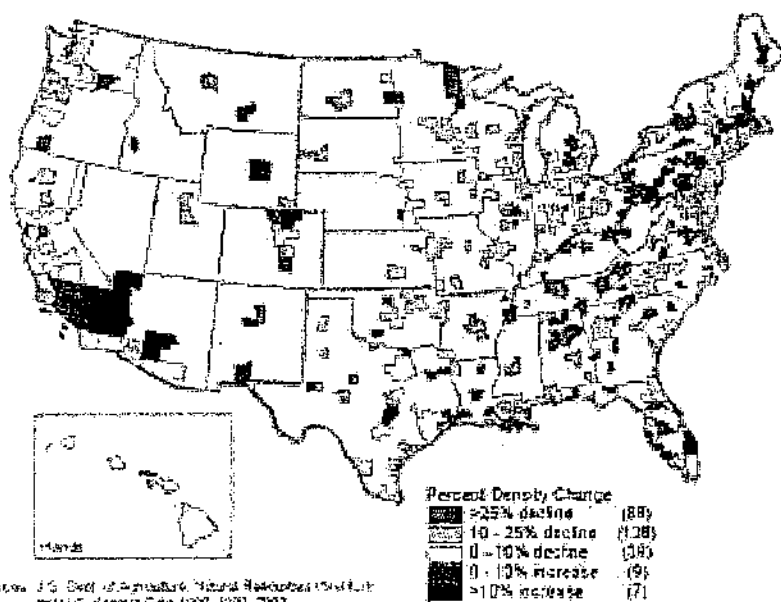
#### Highest Density Metropolitan Areas

| Rank |  | Persons Per Urbanized Acre |
|------|--|----------------------------|
| 1    | Honolulu, HI                                       | 12.36                      |
| 2    | Los Angeles-Anaheim-Riverside, CA                  | 8.31                       |
| 3    | New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT | 7.99                       |
| 4    | Reno, NV   | 7.99                       |
| 5    | San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA                 | 7.96                       |
| 6    | Miami-Fort Lauderdale, FL                          | 7.93                       |
| 7    | Provo-Orem, UT                                     | 7.78                       |
| 8    | San Diego, CA                                      | 7.50                       |
| 9    | Visalia-Tulare-Porterville, CA                     | 7.39                       |
| 10   | Modesto, CA  | 7.31                       |
| 11   | Phoenix, AZ  | 7.20                       |
| 12   | Salinas-Seaside-Monterey, CA                       | 7.08                       |
| 13   | Stockton, CA                                       | 6.82                       |
| 14   | Las Vegas, NV                                      | 6.67                       |
| 15   | Chicago-Gary-Lake County, IL-IN-WI                 | 6.02                       |
| 16   | Providence-Pawtucket-Woonsocket, RI                | 5.93                       |
| 17   | Washington, DC-MD-VA                               | 5.88                       |
| 18   | Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY                          | 5.74                       |
| 19   | Boston-Lawrence-Salem-Lowell-Brockton, MA          | 5.65                       |
| 20   | Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc, CA               | 5.65                       |

#### Lowest Density Metropolitan Areas

| Rank |                              | Persons Per Urbanized Acre |
|------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1    | Ocala, FL                    | 1.23                       |
| 2    | Hickory-Morganton, NC        | 1.55                       |
| 3    | Beaumont-Port Arthur, TX     | 1.65                       |
| 4    | Midland, TX                  | 1.67                       |
| 5    | Santa Fe, NM                 | 1.68                       |
| 6    | Cheyenne, WY                 | 1.70                       |
| 7    | Texarkana, TX-Texarkana, AR  | 1.74                       |
| 8    | Victoria, TX                 | 1.74                       |
| 9    | Anderson, SC                 | 1.75                       |
| 10   | Rapid City, SD               | 1.76                       |
| 11   | Odessa, TX                   | 1.76                       |
| 12   | Decatur, AL                  | 1.77                       |
| 13   | Redding, CA                  | 1.82                       |
| 14   | Richland-Kennewick-Pasco, WA | 1.90                       |
| 15   | Biloxi-Gulfport, MS          | 1.90                       |
| 16   | Sherman-Denison, TX          | 1.91                       |
| 17   | Tyler, TX                    | 1.99                       |
| 18   | Billings, MT                 | 2.01                       |
| 19   | Panama City, FL              | 2.02                       |
| 20   | Fort Myers-Cape Coral, FL    | 2.03                       |

Map 3  
Percent Change in Density, MSAs and CMSAs, 1982–1997



32 percent (14.4 million people), but the region increased its stock of urbanized land by only about 49 percent (4 million acres), for a “marginal” metropolitan density during this period of 3.59 persons per urbanized acre. This was more than triple the marginal metropolitan density of any other region. All other regions of the country—the Northeast, the Midwest, and the South—added approximately one acre of urbanized land for every resident added (See Figure 1).

We will discuss the reasons why the West has a different growth pattern in more detail below. However, it is worth noting that most metropolitan areas in the Western United States are hemmed in by mountains and other topographical constraints and usually by federal land ownership as well. The region’s heavy reliance on public water and sewer systems is another important density-inducing factor. Still another factor may be production homebuilding practices throughout California and the desert Southwest,

which encourage master-planned developments at fairly high densities compared with new suburban development elsewhere in the nation.

Metropolitan density in the Western United States is especially notable in three geographical areas—the California coast, California’s Central Valley, and the desert states of Nevada and Arizona.

California, Arizona, and Nevada were home to ten of the 15 most densely populated metropolitan areas in the United States in 1997. Honolulu (12.36 persons per urbanized acre)<sup>2</sup> was the densest metropolitan area, the Los Angeles Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) ranked second at 8.31 persons per acre, and the New York CMSA ranked third (7.99 persons per urbanized acre). Four California coastal metro areas ranked in the top 12: Los Angeles, San Francisco (fifth), San Diego (eighth), and Salinas-Monterey (12th). Three metro areas in California’s agricultural Central Valley also ranked in the top 15: Visalia

(ninth), Modesto (tenth), and Stockton (13th). All had densities of at least 6.82 persons per acre in 1997. Reno ranked fourth, Phoenix ranked 11th, and Las Vegas ranked 14th.

Examining metropolitan density increases during this period, Las Vegas led the nation with an increase in its metropolitan density of 50 percent, thus rising in the overall density rankings from 114th in 1982 to 14th in 1997. Phoenix ranked third in density gains during this period. Also during this period, metropolitan Los Angeles closed the gap with metropolitan New York considerably. In 1982, metropolitan Los Angeles had 8.09 persons per urbanized acre—roughly 17 percent behind New York (9.44 persons per acre). However, during the next 15 years, metro New York’s density dropped by almost 1.5 persons per acre (a 14.7 percent drop overall), while metro L.A.’s rose slightly. Thus, by 1997, Los Angeles was denser than New York; their densities were 8.31 and 7.99, respectively.

Other metropolitan areas in the West—especially smaller ones—sprawled more noticeably during this period. Portland and Seattle had metropolitan densities of 5.10 persons per urbanized acre in 1997—high by national standards, but much lower than the Southwestern cities. Metropolitan density in both metro areas dropped by approximately 11 percent during the 15-year period—which is not much of a slide by national standards but more than that of the Southwestern cities.

Smaller metro areas experienced considerable sprawl during the 1982–97 period, especially Boise, Idaho; Las Cruces, N.M.; Pueblo, Colorado; and Yuma, Arizona.<sup>3</sup>

#### The South: Growing in population but sprawling as well

With a few exceptions, metropolitan areas in the South are consuming large amounts of land in order to accommodate large amounts of

population growth.

As a region, the South added 17.2 million people between 1982 and 1997—20 percent more than did the West, which added 14.4 million people. But the South consumed three times as much land to accommodate this population growth—increasing its stock of urbanized land by almost 12.5 million acres, compared to an increase of only 4.1 million acres in the West. In density terms, the West averaged 3.59 new residents for every new urbanized acre, compared to only 1.37 for the South.

For example, Nashville increased its metropolitan population by 289,000 people between 1982 and 1997—an increase of approximately 33 percent. But the amount of urbanized land in Nashville increased by 216,000 acres—a rise of more than 100 percent. In other words, Nashville urbanized an average of almost one acre of land to accommodate each additional resident of the metropolitan region. Many other Southern metropolitan areas experienced a similar ratio of population growth to increase in urbanized land, including Huntsville, Alabama; Fort Walton Beach, Florida; Athens, Georgia; Columbia, South Carolina; and Asheville, North Carolina—all of which ranked in the top 25 nationally in the percentage increase in urbanized land.

Atlanta, which has become synonymous with sprawl in the last few years, had the largest absolute (but not percentage) increase in urbanized land of any metropolitan area in the nation—approximately 571,000 acres. This figure was far ahead of New York, Dallas, Los Angeles, and Houston, which ranked second through fifth nationally, again, in terms of absolute rather than percentage gains. High as this figure is in raw numbers, however, it does not look extremely sprawling compared with other Southern metro areas. Atlanta added approximately 1.3 million persons during this period,

**Table 3: Greatest Percentage Gains and Losses in Metropolitan Area Density, 1982-1997**

**Metropolitan Areas with Greatest Density Gain**

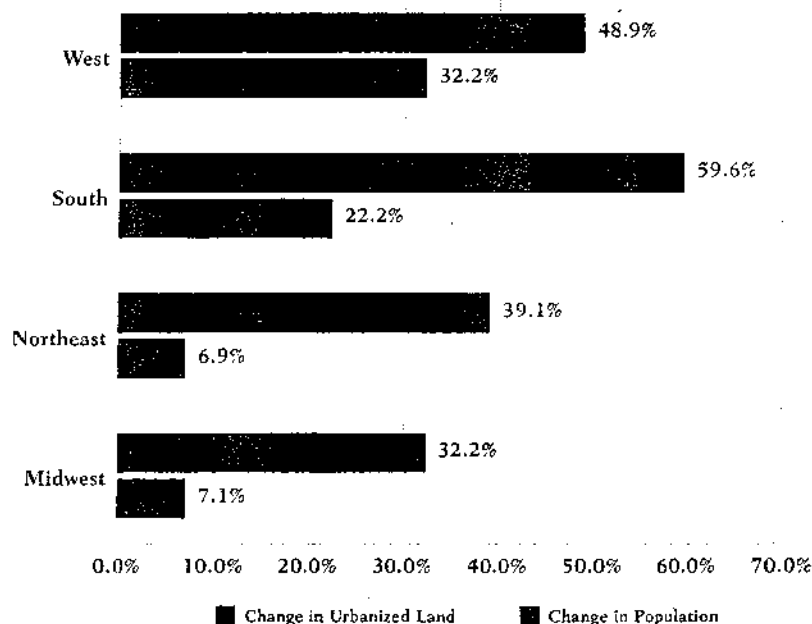
| Rank |   | Density Change |
|------|---|----------------|
| 1    | Las Vegas, NV                               | 50.8%          |
| 2    | Fort Pierce, FL                             | 29.9%          |
| 3    | Phoenix, AZ                                 | 21.9%          |
| 4    | Greeley, CO                                 | 16.1%          |
| 5    | Austin, TX                                  | 16.0%          |
| 6    | Fort Myers-Cape Coral, FL                   | 15.2%          |
| 7    | West Palm Beach-Boca Raton-Delray Beach, FL | 10.4%          |
| 8    | Ocala, FL                                   | 8.1%           |
| 9    | Lincoln, NE                                 | 7.2%           |
| 10   | Fort Collins-Loveland, CO                   | 5.5%           |
| 11   | Fargo-Moorhead, ND-MN                       | 3.9%           |
| 12   | Sarasota, FL                                | 3.4%           |
| 13   | Stockton, CA                                | 2.8%           |
| 14   | Los Angeles-Anaheim-Riverside, CA           | 2.8%           |
| 15   | Medford, OR                                 | 2.0%           |
| 16   | Poughkeepsie, NY                            | 1.0%           |
| 17   | Reno, NV                                    | 0.0%           |
| 18   | Visalia-Tulare-Porterville, CA              | -0.1%          |
| 19   | Fresno, CA                                  | -0.2%          |
| 20   | Salinas-Seaside-Monterey, CA                | -1.3%          |

**Metropolitan Areas with Greatest Density Loss**

| Rank |                              | Density Change |
|------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1    | Pueblo, CO*                  | -87.44%        |
| 2    | Las Cruces, NM*              | -82.20%        |
| 3    | Decatur, AL                  | -51.10%        |
| 4    | Macon-Warner Robins, GA      | -48.64%        |
| 5    | Anniston, AL                 | -45.91%        |
| 6    | Portland, ME                 | -43.65%        |
| 7    | Tuscaloosa, AL               | -42.12%        |
| 8    | Charleston, WV               | -41.22%        |
| 9    | Longview-Marshall, TX        | -41.05%        |
| 10   | Johnstown, PA                | -40.81%        |
| 11   | Muncie, IN                   | -38.22%        |
| 12   | Tyler, TX                    | -38.01%        |
| 13   | Sharon, PA                   | -37.87%        |
| 14   | Steubenville-Weirton, OH-WV  | -37.35%        |
| 15   | Asheville, NC                | -35.83%        |
| 16   | Wheeling, WV-OH              | -35.58%        |
| 17   | Utica-Rome, NY               | -35.51%        |
| 18   | Pittsburgh-Beaver Valley, PA | -35.50%        |
| 19   | Bakersfield, CA              | -35.43%        |
| 20   | Huntsville, AL               | -34.39%        |

\*These large decreases may be due to a sampling error.

Figure 1: Percent Change in Population and Urbanized Land, 1982-1997, by Census Region



meaning the region urbanized approximately one acre of land for every two new residents.

There were some exceptions to the pattern of Southern sprawl, especially in Texas and Florida. In Texas, the large metropolitan areas of Houston, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio all are fairly dense by Southern standards (three persons or more per urbanized acre) and their densities did not decline much between 1982 and 1997. Austin was one of 17 metro areas that grew in density between 1982 and 1997, and the other three declined no more than 8.5 percent, ranking them among the national leaders in "holding" their densities. However, smaller Texas metropolitan areas such as Beaumont, Midland, Tyler, and Odessa rank among the least dense metropolitan areas in the nation, and most of them declined noticeably during the 1982-1997 period.

Florida metro areas varied dramatically in both their density and their density change. Metropolitan Miami has always been densely developed. During the 1982-1997 period it retained its density and in 1997 ranked sixth nationally with a density of 7.93 persons per urbanized acre. Fast-growing Orlando began with a lower density but used land efficiently by Southern standards, increasing its population by 560,000 while urbanizing approximately 150,000 acres of land. Tampa-St. Petersburg had similar figures.

Many smaller metropolitan areas in Florida also experienced density increases during this period. However, these metro areas were extremely sprawling to begin with. For example, Ocala, Florida, increased in density between 1982 and 1997. However, at the end of this 15-year period, it still ranked dead last among all 281 U.S.

metro areas in metropolitan density, with 1.23 persons per urbanized acre.

**The Northeast and the Midwest:** Enormous land consumption, little population growth  
Unlike the West and the South, the Northeast and the Midwest are not increasing their populations very much. However, they are urbanizing large amounts of land anyway. In that sense, these two "Rust Belt" regions can be viewed as being the nation's biggest sprawl problems.

Between 1982 and 1997, the Northeast saw its overall population density drop by 23 percent (to 4.51 persons per urbanized acre) while the Midwest saw its overall population density drop by 19 percent (to 3.39 persons per acre). These regions used land extremely inefficiently. Population in the Northeast increased by 3.4 million people, but its total amount of urbanized land grew by 3.2 million acres—meaning that the region urbanized an average of one acre to accommodate each new resident. In the Midwest, the figures were slightly worse: The region increased its population by 4.1 million people but increased its urbanized land by 4.5 million acres, for a "marginal metropolitan density" of 0.91 persons per acre.

Most metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest added few people but consumed a considerable amount of land. Of the 179 metropolitan areas that experienced slow or no population growth between 1982 and 1997, 117 of them (65 percent) were located in Northeastern and Midwestern states. Boston, for example, grew in population by 6.7 percent but increased its stock of urbanized land by almost half (46.9 percent).

Fifty-six metro areas lost population from 1982 to 1997. Virtually all of them were in the Northeast and Midwest. Every single one of these metro areas increased their total amount of urban land by at least 8 percent.

Half of the metropolitan areas that lost population increased their total amount of urban land by at least 25 percent. Many of these metro areas were in the "Rust Belt" of the Northeast and Midwest. Pittsburgh, for example, dropped 8 percent in population but increased its urbanized land by 42 percent. Steubenville, Ohio, and Wheeling, West Virginia (both of which are near Pittsburgh) dropped in population by approximately 15 percent but saw their urbanized land increase by approximately one-third.

Even those few metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest that did increase their population significantly also sprawled measurably. For example, Minneapolis-St. Paul increased in population by 550,000 persons, or 25 percent. However, it increased its stock of urbanized land by 270,000 acres, or approximately 61 percent. As a result of this "marginal" density of two persons per acre, the region's overall metropolitan density dropped 22 percent, from 4.96 to 3.85 persons per urbanized acre. Another thriving Midwestern city, Columbus, Ohio, recorded somewhat similar statistics, though it did not grow as much. And Portland, Maine, had high population growth by Northeastern standards (17 percent), yet increased its urbanized land by 108 percent—more than five times the percentage increase in population.

However, even with these dramatic declines in density, the older industrial metropolises remained among the densest in the nation even in 1997. New York recorded a density of 7.99, Buffalo 5.74, and Philadelphia 5.03.

*C. Metropolitan areas tend to consume less land for urbanization—relative to population growth—when they are growing rapidly in population, rely heavily on public water and sewer systems, and have high levels of immigrant residents. Metropolitan areas tend to consume more land for urbaniza-*

*tion—again relative to population growth—if they are already high-density metro areas and if they have fragmented local governments.*

Going beyond our description of metropolitan areas, we also explored how density and urbanization relate to factors other than population growth, such as metropolitan area population, demography, economics, physical geography, infrastructure, planning environment, and fiscal structure. As we showed in the previous section, metropolitan areas that are rapidly gaining population have had a wide variety of increases in urbanized land, and metropolitan areas that had large increases in urbanized land did not necessarily do so because they were accommodating large population increases—some were not gaining new residents at all. Other factors, then, must be responsible for the variation we observe among metropolitan areas.

We began with a long list of characteristics we thought might be associated consistently with density, based on literature reviews and our own experience (see Appendix C). Many of these variables are correlated with one another, however, and the large number of variables that would be insignificant in any analysis would create "noise" if they remained in the statistical analysis. We therefore used a technique called backward stepwise regression, which begins by including all the variables in an equation and sequentially removes one variable at a time based on its failure to explain differences in metropolitan density, re-running the analysis at each step. In all cases, these relationships are true "all else being equal"; for example, if we hold growth rates, immigration, Hispanic shares, and other variables constant, more populous metropolitan areas tend to be denser.

Although we found that many of the same variables associated with both density differences in 1997 and density change between 1982 and 1997, other

variables had effects that differed between the two. We also analyzed percent change in urbanized land, and found mostly consistent results.

Eleven variables associated significantly<sup>4</sup> with the regional density variable (see Table 4). Twelve variables explain density change between 1982 and 1997 (see Table 5); and nine associate with variation in percent change in urbanized land (see Table 6). The factors that we discuss cannot be said to "cause" density differences; many of them may in fact be consequences of high or low density. (For regression coefficients, significance levels, and case studies that explain how these variables play out in five metropolitan areas, see [www.brookings.edu/urban/fulton-pendall](http://www.brookings.edu/urban/fulton-pendall).)

Population and historic conditions have strong influences on density, sprawl, and urbanization.

*Faster-growing metropolitan areas tend to be less dense, holding population size constant. They also urbanize more land than slow-growing metropolitan areas. Yet, at the same time, they tend to sprawl less.*

This finding gets at the heart of two different ways to think about sprawl: is it based on current density, or a change in urbanized area compared to population? When we hold constant the population size, metropolitan areas that grew fast between 1982 and 1997 tended to have lower density in 1997. And in our analysis of differences in percent change in urban land, we found that—all else being equal—fast-growth metropolitan areas urbanized more land than did slow-growth regions. Additionally, high-density metros tended to urbanize more land than low-density metros between 1982 and 1987.

Does this mean that population growth caused these metropolitan areas to sprawl? No. In fact, fast-growing metro areas lost less density between 1982 and 1997 than did slow-growing ones. Metropolitan areas

Table 4: Regional characteristics that associate with differences in density, 1997

**Low density regions**

Lower population  
Fast growth  
Few foreign born residents  
More Hispanic residents  
High dependence on local revenue sources for education  
Fewer houses are on sewers  
Adjacent to at least one rural county  
Flat land  
Little or no wetland  
Most land owned by private owners  
Little prime farmland

**High density regions**

Higher population  
Slow growth  
Many foreign born residents  
Fewer Hispanic residents  
High dependence on state, regional sources for education  
More houses are on sewers  
Surrounded by other regions, coast, or foreign country  
Large areas over 15 percent slope  
Substantial wetlands  
Much land owned by government  
Much prime farmland

that were dense in 1982 were likely, all else being equal, to sprawl more between 1982 and 1997 than those that started out with lower densities. But in the West, fast growth—which discourages sprawl—often counteracted the sprawl-inducing effects of high initial density. In the Northeast, by contrast, most high-density metropolitan areas grew much more slowly than those in the West. Since both high density and slow growth induce sprawl, the Northeast sprawled more than the West.

Together, the analyses of density change and urbanization paint a complicated picture. Fast-growth metropolitan areas urbanize more land, but do so at higher densities, than slow-growing ones; high-density metropolitan areas tend to lose more density, and urbanize more rapidly, than low-density ones.

Low-density metropolitan areas may be growing fast because their per-acre land values are lower than in high-density metros, or low density may be an indicator of other characteristics that make these places more attractive for growth and development. At the same time, metropolitan areas that lose population, or that grow slowly, tend to develop at lower densities than do the rapidly growing metros. One explanation for this is that people are

competing with each other for land more intensively in metros where population is growing fast. This competition will drive land prices up, thereby encouraging developers to make more efficient use of land—that is, to build at higher densities.

*More populous metropolitan areas tend to be denser.*

New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago are dense partly because they have large populations. Aggregations of people create “agglomeration economies” that place more value on proximity. With more value on proximity, land values rise, and density increases.

**Demographic characteristics also exert strong influences.**

*Metropolitan areas with large shares of foreign-born residents had much higher densities in 1997, and sprawled less from 1982 to 1997.*

We need to explore the dynamics of immigration and density in more detail, but they do seem to be strongly connected. In fact, the single most important variable in explaining differences among metro areas’ density change from 1982 to 1997 was the share of 1990 residents who were born abroad.

A lack of immigrants may help explain Atlanta’s sprawl; only 4.1 per-

cent of its residents were foreign-born in 1990, compared with 13.3 percent in Houston. The difference between the foreign-born composition of these two metro areas would add up to a 12-percentage-point difference in density change, with Houston gaining 17.3 percent in density between 1982 and 1997 by virtue of its immigrant composition, compared with only a 5.3 percent rise in Atlanta. This finding provides very strong evidence that efforts by anti-immigration groups to link sprawl with immigration are misguided. Instead, immigration seems to be good for density and to mitigate other factors that lead to sprawl. Metropolitan areas with fewer foreign-born residents also had higher percent changes in urbanization, holding all else constant, than those with more foreign-born residents.

*Metropolitan areas with high shares of Hispanic and black residents sprawl more; those with high shares of Hispanics had lower density in 1997.*

We have already seen that many of the fastest-sprawling metro areas are in the South outside Florida. Some of these metro areas—for example, Albany, Georgia; Pine Bluff, Arkansas; Memphis, Tennessee; and Montgomery, Alabama—also have among the highest concentrations of black

Table 5: Regional characteristics that associate with differences in density change, 1982-1997

**Rapid density loss**

High density  
Less urban land  
Slow growth  
Few foreign born residents  
More Hispanic residents  
More black residents  
Fewer elderly residents  
Smaller local governments  
States require growth management  
Fewer houses on sewers  
More houses on public water  
Less prime farmland

**Density gain (or less rapid loss)**

Low density  
More urban land  
Fast growth  
Many foreign born residents  
Fewer Hispanic residents  
Fewer black residents  
More elderly residents  
Larger local governments  
States do not require growth management  
More houses on sewers  
Fewer houses on public water  
More prime farmland

Table 6: Regional characteristics that associate with differences in urbanization, 1982-1997

**Urbanized more land**

Fast growth  
High density  
Fewer elderly residents  
Fewer foreign-born residents  
More Hispanic residents  
States require growth management  
Highways constitute lower share of budget  
Fewer houses on sewers  
More houses on public water

**Urbanized less land**

Slow growth  
Low density  
More elderly residents  
More foreign-born residents  
Fewer Hispanic residents  
States do not require growth management  
Highways constitute higher share of budget  
More houses on sewers  
Fewer houses on public water

residents in the nation, and most also have very small foreign-born populations. Perhaps because of a combination of white flight with no compensating foreign immigration, these metropolitan areas lost density rapidly between 1982 and 1997.

Metropolitan areas with many native-born Hispanic residents sprawl more than those without as many native-born Hispanics, all else being equal; whether this is a result of white flight or because native-born Hispanics are acculturating and joining in the move to lower-density neighborhoods is an issue that requires more detailed research. Few metropolitan areas with high shares of Hispanic residents do not also have high shares of immigrants; these are two counterbalancing

forces whose joint effects will differ from one metro area to another. We found broadly consistent results in the analysis of both percent change in urbanized land and density change between 1982 and 1997.

A telling example compares Corpus Christi, Texas, to Miami. Holding all other factors equal, both metropolitan areas lost 20 percent in density owing to the effect of being about 50 percent Hispanic in 1990. But whereas about 5 percent of Corpus Christi's residents were foreign born, 45 percent of Miami's were born abroad. Corpus Christi made up only 6 percent of the density decrease with its foreign-born composition, whereas Miami's foreign-born residents give it nearly a 60 percent boost in density—more than

compensating for the isolated effect of its Hispanic population.

*Metropolitan areas with more elderly residents sprawled less.*

Metropolitan areas with more elderly residents lost less density between 1982 and 1997 than those with higher shares of young or middle-aged residents, perhaps because elderly residents often tend to live at higher densities than larger families and households. Also, there are life-cycle factors (e.g., having children) that motivate young or middle-age residents to choose single-family suburban (less dense) residences.